SERMONS ON THE MASS, THE SACRAMENTS, AND THE SACRAMENTALS

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SERMONS ON THE MASS, THE SACRAMENTS, AND THE SACRAMENTALS

BY

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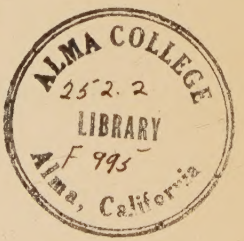

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TO
OUR HOLY MOTHER
THE CHURCH
"THE CITY OF TRUTH,
AND
THE MOUNTAIN
OF
THE LORD OF HOSTS,
THE
SANCTIFIED MOUNTAIN"

(Zacharias viii. 3.)

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PART I

MOUNT SION

"You shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Sion My holy mountain; and Jerusalem shall be holy and strangers shall pass through it no more." (Joel iii. 17.)

SERMONS ON THE MASS, THE SACRAMENTS, AND THE SACRAMENTALS

I

SIGNS OF THE COVENANT

RITES AND CEREMONIES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

"We would know, therefore, what these things mean." (Acts xvii. 20.)

THE entire body of religious truth is so immense that we could not possibly in the time at our disposal even glance at some of those interesting subjects which could well supply material for life-long study on the part of those who would know the science of the saints, the art of arts, the manner of loving and serving Almighty God, of faithfully discharging those duties which we owe to Him, to our neighbor, and to ourselves.

We might speak of Almighty God Himself, of His divine nature and attributes, of re-

ligion in general, of Holy Scripture, of the life of our Blessed Redeemer, His Holy Mother, or the saints; of Holy Church and her history, her dogmas, sufferings, and triumphs, explaining, proving, and defending what we hold dearer than life itself—the principles of our holy Faith.

But we speak not to those "like the Gentiles that know not God" (1 Thess. iv. 5), for, as earnest Catholics, your intimate relations with your Creator and Redeemer in the practical exercise of your religion, your familiar conversation with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are ample proofs of no small acquaintance with divine revelation. By your regular attendance at our discourses you have given still further proof of your deep-rooted belief in the importance of the eternal truths, your hope in the merits of Christ and your loyal devotion to His Holy Church.

We speak therefore not to enemies, nor to strangers, but to friends, children "of the household of the Faith" (Gal. vi. 10), who seek earnestly to know, love, and serve their heavenly Father, not as hirelings, but as His dearest children, brothers of Jesus Christ and heirs to His kingdom: "For the Spirit Himself giveth testimony to our spirit that we are

the sons of God. And if sons, heirs also; heirs indeed of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 16, 17). "For the rest therefore, brethren," as St. Paul says, "we pray and beseech you in the Lord Jesus, that as you have received from us, how you ought to walk and to please God, so also you would walk, that you may abound the more" (1 Thess. iv. 1), thus "being faithful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Col. i. 10.)

The angels in heaven know Almighty God, as it is said, *intuitively;* that is, they know Him immediately, without effort, without the aid of reasoning or of teaching. They love and serve Him "face to face." As our divine Master said on one occasion, "their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father who is in heaven" (Matt. xviii. 10); but "we see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face" (1 Cor. xiii. 12), as St. Paul expresses it. Burdened as we are in this life with our frail mortal body, we must seek that knowledge and cultivate that love from the various sources within our reach. We must exercise our senses as well as the faculties of our mind—the memory, the intellect, and the will.

In addition to this inherent necessity of our nature, we are surrounded by many dangers and temptations on account of the frailty and weakness bequeathed to us through the fall of our first parents, and we are accordingly easily led astray by other interests. "The concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John ii. 16), as well as the constant attacks of our infernal enemy the devil, who "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter v. 8), all serve to "darken the understanding, weaken the will, and leave in us a strong inclination to evil," as the catechism refers to the chief results of original sin.

But we can successfully oppose these enemies of our salvation with strong spiritual weapons. We can, as our divine Master Himself advises us, "make friends of the mammon of iniquity" (Luke xvi. 9), our own corrupt senses, and with God's help transform them from sources of weakness and danger to instruments of strength and safety; thus, as St. Paul says, "yielding our members to serve justice, unto sanctification." (Rom. vi. 19.)

Not being pure spirits, we must derive our knowledge through the medium of the senses.

By the latter, in turn, we express our ideas and convey our thoughts and feelings to others. Thus, whilst we worship Almighty God "as true adorers in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 23), there still exists the natural necessity for the use of outward signs and symbols, so that we may express, according to our twofold nature, our sentiments of adoration and love for our Creator as well as impress upon our minds, by the use of suitable exterior manifestations, a knowledge of divine things and a becoming reverence in dealing with them.

"If all men," says an ancient writer, "were enlightened by education and philosophy, and at all hours actuated by the principles of reason, it would be unnecessary to have recourse to external objects. But as there must always be a great majority, who, for want of opportunities or capacities for improvement, are weak and ignorant; and as even amongst the wise and learned there are none who are constantly exempted from the common infirmities of human nature, it becomes expedient to devise means of operating on the soul, through the medium of the senses. It was for this reason that in all great communities the officers and offices of religion have been sur-

rounded by whatever is calculated to arouse the attention, to interest the heart, to strike the eyes, and to elevate the imagination." [1]

Even apart altogether from the worship of Almighty God, the necessity for outward signs and ceremonies is quite apparent from the natural instinct and universal custom of having recourse to them in the ordinary transactions of our daily lives, especially when the mutual interests of the parties concerned are in any way affected. Thus we uncover or bow the head, shake hands, or use formal methods of address in order to signify our respect or esteem for those with whom we have social, friendly, or business relations. Indeed, our entire social fabric is honeycombed with ceremony. As Shakespeare says, "What have kings that privates have not too, save ceremony?" And where those outside the Church are deprived of much that is elevating and ennobling in the ceremonies that surround her great religious acts, as, for instance, in the celebration of the holy sacrament of Matrimony, the deficiency is sought to be filled by the employment of merely human and sometimes even of pagan rites. And although the Church has an infinitely higher object in view

[1] Knox, "Essays," no. 151.

in her sublime ritual, it must be acknowledged that some of these inferior rites at least serve to impress upon the parties themselves something of the importance of the union they contract. What would a young couple think of their wedding-day if their marriage were celebrated by mere mutual consent given and received in private? Even the law of the land would not recognize such a contract. So people as a rule exert themselves to the utmost to render the occasion important by employing all the outward ceremonial possible—the elaborate dress and expensive ornaments, the wreath and veil and bouquet, the breakfast, the bridesmaids, the congratulatory speeches, letters, and telegrams and the multitude of other well-known tokens which serve at least to render the occasion an important social function.

In the same way, then, but in a much higher sphere, arises the necessity for sacred signs and ceremonies in our dealings with Almighty God. And we find that from the earliest times man made use of them in his worship of the Creator. God Himself made the rainbow in the sky the sign of His covenant with Noe and his descendants—"And God said: This is the sign of the covenant which I give between Me and you, and to every living soul that is

with you, for perpetual generations. I will set My bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of a covenant between Me and between the earth. And when I shall cover the sky with clouds, My bow shall appear in the clouds: and I will remember My covenant with you." (Gen. ix. 12–15.) Abel offered sacrifice, and the patriarchs raised up altars for public worship. Almighty God Himself prescribed in detail the numerous rites and ceremonies that were to be used by the Jewish priests and people under the Old Law. We find in the Book of Leviticus a most elaborate and detailed ritual for their guidance and observance in the conduct of both public and private worship. When Our Lord Jesus Christ came upon earth He no doubt gave us a new dispensation and established a new form of worship. The old law and the old ritual passed away; but not the old necessity. Christ Himself might have performed every one of His wonderful miracles by a single act of His all-powerful will without the aid of the slightest exterior manifestation of His influence. But He had regard for the weakness and infirmity of human nature, and so made frequent use of outward signs and ceremonies in order to impress the people and give due glory to His

Heavenly Father. Thus, when He gave sight to the man born blind "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay upon his eyes, and said to him: Go, wash in the pool of Siloe." (John ix. 6, 7.) When He raised Lazarus from the dead He, "weeping, groaned in the spirit, and troubled Himself" and "cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth." (John xi. 33–43.) When He manifested Himself to His apostles after His resurrection "He breathed on them; and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost." (John xx. 22.) And the apostles themselves afterward made use of similar ceremonies, as, for example, when St. Peter and St. John visited the converts of Samaria, "they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts viii. 17.) Finally, St. John, in order to impress upon our minds the greatness and the glory of the Heavenly Jerusalem, describes the wonderful rites and ceremonies which took place "before the throne of the Lamb" as witnessed by him in vision. He speaks of "the vision of the throne of God," "the twenty-four ancients," "the book with seven seals," and relates how an angel "came and stood before the altar, having a golden censer: and there was given to him much in-

cense, that he should offer up the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God" (Apoc. viii), together with many other wonderful and impressive sights.

Thus the use of rites and ceremonies by the Church in the celebration of divine worship is founded on natural reason, ordained by God, and was practised by Christ and the apostles. And so the Holy Council of Trent declares: "Such being the nature of man that without exterior aids he can not be easily elevated to a meditation on divine subjects, on this account our pious mother the Church has instituted certain rites; for instance, that some parts of the Mass should be pronounced in a low tone, and other parts in an elevated tone. She has also employed ceremonies, such as mystic benedictions, lights, incense, vestments, and many other things of this kind, in accordance with apostolic discipline and tradition for the purport, not only that the majesty of so great a sacrifice might appear in becoming splendor, but that the minds of the faithful might, by these visible signs of piety and religion, be excited to a contemplation of those sublime things which lie hid in this sacrifice." (Sess. xxii. v.)

It will be our object, then, to endeavor to understand in detail the meaning of those various sacred signs and ceremonies, which are of course analogous to the signs and ceremonies of ordinary intercourse, though of a superior and a more sublime order. Some of these are what are called *natural* signs; that is, they of their own nature freely convey to our minds the ideas of the objects or truths which they represent. Thus, for instance, music and song, lights and flowers naturally represent joy and gladness, though in certain circumstances these may be suggestive of the exactly opposite emotions. Smoke is a sign of fire, water of cleansing or of cooling. Darkness and silence represent gloom and sadness. What a difference there is between the sad notes of the funeral bell and the bright, glad tones of the wedding-march or the triumphant tones of the war-song! Between the sable garments of the mourners and the varied costumes of the wedding-guests!

Some, again, are *conventional* signs, appropriately representing by mutual convention or agreement some idea or sentiment which we wish to convey to the minds of others, or impress upon them. Such, for instance, are the signs and sounds of the words and language

which we write and speak, our various methods of salutation, the flags of nations, the crown and scepter of the sovereign, the uniforms and insignia of his soldiers and officers, the banners of his knights, the etiquette of his court, the mottoes, badges, rings, and tokens of all kinds in daily use which are so much prized by their possessors as valuable reminders of gratitude or love, or never-to-be-forgotten links of friendship or of fond memories.

In our next discourse we shall proceed to examine with loving reverence those many "visible signs of piety and religion" which, according to the Holy Council of Trent, will, please God, "excite our minds to the contemplation of those sublime things hidden" in the House of God on the Holy Mount—hidden indeed from the eyes and from the minds and hearts of those outside the one true Fold, but clear and simple to the "children of the household of the faith" to whom they eloquently speak of the love and the goodness and the greatness and the beauty of Almighty God Himself and of His angels and saints; for, just as the stained-glass windows of our churches appear from the outside to be nothing but a confused conglomeration of many-colored patches of lead and glass, yet when

seen from the interior, with the light of the sun streaming through them, they express in beautiful tone and color the ideas of the artist who wished to convey in his picture some portion of heavenly truth. So, by the light of faith, we see in the wonderful rites and ceremonies of Holy Church not a meaningless collection of signs and symbols but a marvelous picture of living reality, which truly "shows her beauty to all the people and the princes: for she is exceedingly beautiful." (Esther i. 11.)

II

THE HOUSE OF GOD

THE CHURCH

"Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord and to the house of the God of Jacob." (Is. ii. 3.)

WHEN we speak of the mountain of the Lord, the house of God, Mount Sion, Jerusalem, the temple of the Holy Ghost, or the Church in general, we speak in a figurative sense of those wonderful places of the abode of Almighty God, who, though He is truly present in all places by His very essence, seems to dwell in a special manner in them by His power, and is graciously pleased to manifest in a special degree the glory which the angels and saints enjoy, according to their nature and privileges, in the kingdom of heaven. For, as our divine Master explained to His disciples after the Last Supper, saying: "In My Father's house there are many mansions" (John xiv. 2), so the variety of meanings attached to these different expressions is also numerous.

"The mountain of the Lord" was originally Mount Sinai, on which Almighty God descended and delivered the Ten Commandments to the people amidst thunder and lightning and other such awe-inspiring circumstances that they were terrified—"And all the people saw the voices and the flames, and the sound of the trumpet, and the mount smoking; and being terrified and struck with fear, they stood afar off, saying to Moses: Speak thou to us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die." (Ex. xx. 18, 19.)

Notwithstanding the wonderful and impressive manner in which the commandments were given to the Jews, however, they soon forgot God and His holy law and gave themselves over to idolatry, impurity, and ingratitude. But the prophet Isaias afterward foretold that the Redeemer would come and restore to man the lost gifts of the fear and love of his Creator and again enrich him with graces and blessings by the law of love which He was to announce for all time from the new Mount Sion: "Sion shall be redeemed in judgment, and they shall bring her back in justice." (Is. i. 27.) Sion was one of the mountains upon which the city of Jerusalem was built. It was afterward called "the city of David," because

King David established his royal residence there. Jerusalem itself is called "the holy city" because David brought there the Ark of the Covenant, which was later on placed in the temple of Solomon, and because of the intimate personal relations of our divine Master with it during His life, especially during the last sad scenes. He foresaw its future ruin and destruction because of its rejection of Him through the blindness, obstinacy, and hardheartedness of His own chosen people, and He wept over it "because it had not known the time of its visitation." (Luke xix. 44.) Hence Jerusalem is a sad but beautiful picture of the human soul enriched by God's graces and favors yet rejecting His commands with ingratitude. Thus also Isaias prophesied "concerning Juda and Jerusalem. And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go, and say: Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (ii.

1–3.) And again: "It shall come to pass, that every one that shall be left in Sion, and that shall remain in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, every one that is written in life in Jerusalem." (iv. 3.)

These references to the ancient Jewish church and the prophecies concerning the wonderful graces and privileges of the new Church established by Christ on Mount Sion are referred to by St. Paul, who directs our attention to the marvelous difference between the two dispensations, thus: "You are not come to a mountain that might be touched, and a burning fire, and a whirlwind, and darkness, and storm, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which they that heard excused themselves, that the word might not be spoken to them. For they did not endure that which was said: And if so much as a beast shall touch the mount, it shall be stoned. And so terrible was that which was seen, Moses said: I am frighted, and tremble. But you are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first-born, who are written in the heavens, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to

Jesus the mediator of the new testament, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel." (Heb. xii. 18–24.) The blood of Abel cried for vengeance, but the blood of Jesus cries for love and mercy.

So that we may proceed, then, with due order and method, let us imagine that an angel from heaven is permitted by Almighty God to put on for a time our frail mortality and to assume a human body, like the angel Raphael, who, in the form of a young man, guided Tobias on his perilous journey. (Tob. v.) But our angel friend, instead of leading us, needs himself to be led, for he will not now find it easy to assimilate, understand, and always remember images and ideas that can come to him only through the medium of the human senses. He will also naturally find many difficulties in expressing his sentiments. But he will also see with his bodily eyes many things which when properly understood will remind him so much of heavenly truths, will afford him so much spiritual consolation, and keep him so constantly in the presence of Almighty God upon earth, that he will scarcely feel that he is for a time, like us during the brief term of our mortal lives, only "a pilgrim and a stranger on

the earth, desiring a better, a heavenly country." (Heb. xi. 13, 16.)

In the company of our angel friend, then, "let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob," and endeavor to point out and explain to him some of the many wonders it contains, so that we may by God's gracious assistance the better understand and the more fully appreciate "what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.) And God Himself "will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Is. ii. 3.)

In the first place, we must explain what "the Church" really means. The word itself literally signifies "the Lord's House," but it is also used to signify the general body of the faithful, who, as the catechism says, "being baptized, profess the same faith, have the same sacraments and sacrifices, and are governed by one visible head on earth." In this sense we speak of the saints in heaven as the "Church triumphant," of the holy souls in purgatory as the "Church suffering," and of the faithful on earth as the "Church militant," for these are

all members of the one body of Christ, as St. Paul explains: "The body is one, and hath many members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body, so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. xii. 12, 13.)

When we refer to the "house of God" as the dwelling place of the Most High we must further distinguish three different places of abode. Heaven is the kingdom of His glory, where He principally manifests Himself to the blessed. "To Thee have I lifted up my eyes, who dwellest in heaven" (Ps. cxxii. 1), says the Psalmist: and "Thus saith the Lord: Heaven is my throne" (lxvi. 1), says the prophet Isaias: whilst our divine Master Himself said: "In My Father's house there are many mansions." (John xiv. 2.)

Those who desire to obtain a place in those mansions of eternal bliss must be all-holy and pleasing to Almighty God—"Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest in Thy holy hill? He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice" (Ps. xiv. 1)—"The innocent in hands, and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain" (Ps. xxiii. 4), says the Psalmist: and "You shall know that

I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Sion My holy mountain: and Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall pass through it no more" (iii. 17), says the prophet Joel.

The soul of the just man is also referred to as the special dwelling-place of Almighty God. "If any one love Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him" (John xiv. 23), says Christ; and: "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? But if any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the temple of God is holy, which you are" (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17), says St. Paul.

Finally, the material house in which the faithful worship God, and in which above all He deigns to dwell in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, is the literal fulfillment of that divine abode prefigured in the prophecy of St. John in the Apocalypse: "Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them. And they shall be His people; and God Himself with them shall be their God" (Apoc. xxi. 3); and by the prophet Isaias long before: "Rejoice, and praise, O thou habitation of Sion: for great is He that is

in the midst of thee, the Holy One of Israel." (xii. 6.)

Apart from the wonderful privilege of the actual presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in our tabernacles in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, the temple where we meet in public to worship our Creator is rightly called the "house of God." Our divine Master Himself thus referred to the temple of Jerusalem, which was a mere shadow and figure of our Catholic churches, saying: "My house shall be called the house of prayer." (Matt. xxi. 13.) But what are we to think of the dignity, the glory, and the majesty of that house where Jesus Himself takes up his abode night and day in the Blessed Sacrament in our tabernacles? Where He abides constantly with us as truly and as really as he dwelt for a time in the stable at Bethlehem or in the Holy House at Nazareth? Truly the promise made by Almighty God to King Solomon with regard to the temple of Jerusalem is here literally fulfilled: "I have chosen, and have sanctified this place, that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart may remain there perpetually." (2 Paral. vii. 16.)

In those holy temples, too, the voice of God is heard continually, not as on Mount Sinai

amidst the terrors of thunder and lightning, but in accents of mercy and kindness announcing and explaining His precepts to the children of His love by the mouth of the priest, according to the prophecy of Isaias: "The law shall come forth from Sion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (ii. 3), for Christ gave to St. Peter and the Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests of the Church, the duty, the privilege, and the power of ruling and guiding, of rebuking, exhorting, and entreating "in all patience and doctrine" (2 Tim. iv. 2) that visible society of His faithful followers which He so firmly established to last for all time, saying to them: "All power is given Me in heaven and in earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 18–20.) In those holy temples, too, the prophecy of Zachary is fulfilled: "In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: for the washing of the sinner" (Zach. xiii. 1), for the holy sacrifice of the Mass is continually

offered up and the grace of the holy sacraments conferred in favor of all who sincerely and with confidence approach the throne of God's grace and mercy. Truly we may say, therefore, "Behold a wise and understanding people, a great nation. Neither is there any other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions." (Deut. iv. 6, 7.)

How truly wise and understanding, then, should we not be, and how carefully we should strive to realize "how we ought to behave ourselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." (1 Tim. iii. 15.) We should, therefore, always preserve a respectful silence as well as a becoming attitude, especially during the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the administration of any of the sacraments. Unfortunately, many Catholics are not so edifying in their conduct as they ought to be on the occasion of a baptism or a marriage. They seem to forget that on these two occasions a very solemn rite is being performed which should claim their devout attention entirely, for in each case a holy sacrament is being conferred. There should, therefore, be no conversation, no whispering, comments, levity, or want of

due respect in any other way. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, always so meek and gentle with sinners, on one occasion actually punished with His own sacred hands those who were guilty of disrespect in the temple of Jerusalem, for "when He had made, as it were, a scourge of little cords, He drove them all out of the temple, the sheep also and the oxen, and the money of the changers He poured out, and the tables He overthrew. And to them that sold doves He said: Take these things hence, and make not the house of My Father a house of traffic." (John ii. 15, 16.) There are many examples of the terrible punishments inflicted by Almighty God on those who were guilty of similar irreverence.

All extravagance and vanity in our dress and appearance, especially when we approach the Holy Table, are altogether out of place in the church, above all other places, for these things are insults to the meekness and humility of Jesus Himself, especially during the holy sacrifice of the Mass and in the presence of the Most Blessed Sacrament. If St. Paul was so particular in laying down the manner of conduct which he expected the early Christians to follow, as, for example, "Every man praying or prophesying with his head covered, dis-

graceth his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head not covered, disgraceth her head" (1 Cor. xi. 4, 5), how much more careful ought we not to be when our manners and customs, both religious and social, are so much more definitely prescribed and recognized.

Let us ever remember, then, that in God's house "the place wherein we stand is holy ground" (Acts vii. 33), for God Himself is present there. And then Almighty God will be disposed to bless us and grant our petitions. May He grant us, too, the grace of the spirit of prayer which He promises through His Prophet to the faithful children of His Holy Church: "I will pour out upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of prayers." (Zach. xii. 10.)

III

THE GATE OF HEAVEN

THE TABERNACLE

"How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven." (Gen. xxviii. 17.)

Up to the time of Moses the Israelites had no fixed place of worship or properly constituted priesthood. Till then the holy patriarchs, and later on the heads of families, had offered sacrifice to God, now in one place and now in another, as the time and circumstances permitted or suggested. But Moses received orders to construct a sanctuary and was given detailed directions as to everything that concerned divine worship. "And they shall make Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in the midst of them: according to all the likeness of the tabernacle which I will show thee, and of all the vessels for the service thereof." (Ex. xxv. 8, 9.) Accordingly the tabernacle was built. This was a portable

building made of the most precious wood and plated with the purest gold. It contained two parts, separated by a richly decorated curtain or veil. The larger of these was called the sanctuary, and the smaller the holy of holies. In the latter were placed the ark of the Covenant, which was covered all over with the purest gold. And in the ark itself were the tables of the law or covenant which had been given by Almighty God to Moses on Mount Sinai. Afterward a vase of the wonderful manna, with which the Israelites had been miraculously fed for forty years in the desert, was added: as also the rod of Aaron, with which so many extraordinary miracles were performed for the benefit of the chosen people, such as the plagues of Egypt and the dividing of the waters of the Red Sea to make a dry passage for those who were fleeing from the cruelty and oppression of King Pharao. Over the ark was a golden lid, called the propitiatory, at each end of which stood two golden cherubim. In the holy of holies were placed the altar of incense, the famous seven-branched candlestick, the table of the twelve loaves of proposition, and a golden vase filled with wine. No one was allowed to enter the sanctuary but the priests, and no one was allowed to enter the

holy of holies but the high priest, and even he only once a year.

When the building was completed, Moses solemnly consecrated it to the service of God by pouring oil upon it and upon all it contained, and the presence of God was made manifest by a cloud which descended upon the propitiatory and rested between the wings of the cherubim.

Long afterward a more solid and magnificent temple was built by King Solomon, who spared neither trouble nor expense in its construction. It took seven years to complete it, and some idea of the immensity of the undertaking may be gathered from the fact that there were employed in the work no fewer than three thousand six hundred overseers. In it also were the sanctuary, the holy of holies, and the various sacred objects of the tabernacle, after the plan of which it was designed.

When the building was completed, Solomon himself consecrated and dedicated it to the service of God with the most gorgeous and imposing ceremonies. When all had "lifted up their voice on high, the sound was heard afar off. So that when they began to praise the Lord, and to say: Give glory to the Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever,

the house of God was filled with a cloud. Nor could the priests stand and minister by reason of the cloud. For the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." (2 Paral. v. 13, 14.)

Then Solomon prayed that Almighty God would grant the petitions of His faithful people which should be offered up in that holy house. "And when Solomon had made an end of his prayer, fire came down from heaven, and consumed the holocausts and the victims: and the majesty of the Lord filled the house." (Ibid. vii. 1.) Moreover, "the Lord appeared to him by night, and said: I have heard thy prayer, and I have chosen this place to Myself for a house of sacrifice. If I shut up heaven, and there fall no rain, or if I give orders, and command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people: And My people, upon whom My name is called, being converted, shall make supplication to Me, and seek out My face, and do penance for their most wicked ways: then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins and will heal their land. My eyes also shall be open, and My ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place. For I have chosen, and have sanctified this place, that My name may be there for ever, and My eyes

and My heart may remain there perpetually." (Ibid. 12–16.)

But, great, glorious and magnificent as was the temple which King Solomon built to the glory of God, precious in the sight of the Almighty Creator as were the sacred objects it contained, and ready as He was to hear the prayers and grant the petitions of those who approached His throne in that wonderful place, it was still but a mere shadow and figure of our Catholic churches, which, though comparatively poor in appearance, contain the God of heaven Himself, truly present in the tabernacle in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Here He is ever waiting to pour out upon us His richest graces and dispense to us His choicest favors. Truly "there is no other nation so great, that hath gods so nigh them, as our God is present to all our petitions." (Deut. iv. 7.) As the disciple in the "Imitation of Christ" says, addressing our divine Master in the tabernacle: "Behold, Noe, a just man, toiled a hundred years in building the ark, that he with a few might be preserved . . . Moses, Thy servant, Thy great and special friend, made an ark of incorruptible wood, which he also covered with most pure gold, that he might deposit therein the tables of the

Law. . . Solomon, the wisest of the kings of Israel, employed several years in building a magnificent temple for the praise of Thy name, and for eight days together he celebrated the feast of the dedication thereof; he offered a thousand pacific victims, and brought in the ark of the covenant in a solemn manner into the place prepared for it with the sound of the trumpet and jubilee. . . . And yet surely, in the life-giving presence of the Deity, no unbecoming thought should occur, nor anything created take up my mind. . . . There is a very great difference between the ark of the covenant with its relics, and Thy most pure body with its unspeakable virtues; between those sacrifices of the law, which were figures of things to come, and the true sacrifice of Thy body, which is the accomplishing of all those ancient sacrifices. Why, then, am I not more inflamed, considering Thy venerable presence? Why do I not prepare myself with greater care to receive Thy sacred gifts, seeing that these ancient holy patriarchs and prophets, yea, kings also and princes, with the whole people, have shown so great affection of devotion toward the divine worship? . . . If so great devotion was then used, and such remembrance of the praise of God, before the ark of the

covenant; how great ought to be the reverence and devotion which I, and all Christian people, should have in the presence of this Sacrament? . . . If this most holy Sacrament were only celebrated in one place, and consecrated by only one priest in the world, with how great a desire dost Thou think men would be affected to that place, and to such a priest of God, that they might see the divine mysteries celebrated." (Bk. iv. Ch. 1.)

No wonder, then, that that sacred body to which our divine Lord entrusted the care and service of His sanctuary, where the precious merits of His sacred passion and death are daily applied to our souls, should so much appreciate the privilege, and should accordingly exercise such wonderful care in the selection of the site, the appearance of the building, and its proper equipment and furnishing, saying to herself what King David said to his people: "The work is great, for a house is prepared not for man, but for God." (1 Paral. xxix. 1.)

In order to impress upon the minds and hearts of her faithful children the wonderful greatness and glory of that holy temple and the nature of the spiritual and temporal favors which await us there, as well as to honor as best she can the unspeakable majesty of Him who

is to dwell within it in so special a manner, our holy mother the Church blesses and dedicates with her most dignified and solemn ceremonies what is to be indeed "the house of God and the gate of heaven" and "the tabernacle of God with men." "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth," says St. John. "For the first heaven and the first earth was gone, and the sea is now no more. And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice from the throne, saying: Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and he will dwell with them. And they shall be his people; and God himself with them shall be their God." (Apoc. xxi. 1–3.)

Now, as always, she uses nothing in her religious ceremonies without first blessing and consecrating it to the special service of God by prayer: "For every creature of God is good," says St. Paul, "and nothing to be rejected that is to be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5). Through the sins of men the power of the devil even over inanimate nature is great. "I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power," says St.

John, "And he cried out with a strong voice, saying: Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen; and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every unclean spirit, and the hold of every unclean and hateful bird: Because all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." (Apoc. xviii. 1–3.) Hence even in the Old Law Almighty God forbade sacrifice to be offered except in such places as were chosen by Him and consecrated for that special purpose—"Beware lest thou offer thy holocausts in every place that thou shalt see: But in the place which the Lord shall choose." (Deut. xii. 13, 14.)

Usually the Church blesses with some short but impressive ceremony whatever is required for the immediate service of God. But in the solemn dedication of her temples as it were, she spares neither time nor trouble. Thereby she not only follows her own natural instinct but imitates as well the example of the holy men of old, who were specially directed by God Himself to consecrate His temples with a sublime and most elaborate ceremonial. We are told that at the dedication of the church of Tyre and of that of the holy sepulcher at Jerusalem in the fourth century bishops were assembled from all parts of the East, and that some of

the holy bishops who were to take part in such ceremonies spent whole nights in prayer and frequently forty days in fasting as a preparation for the important event.

After the example of Jacob the Church anoints her temples with oil, and formally dedicates them under the protection of some special patron, such as some holy mystery, angel, or saint. Jacob had a vision in sleep in which he saw "a ladder standing upon the earth, and the top thereof touching heaven: the angels also of God ascending and descending by it: and the Lord leaning upon the ladder." (Gen. xxviii. 12, 13.) "And when Jacob awaked out of his sleep, he said: Indeed the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And trembling he said: How terrible is this place! this is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven. And Jacob, arising in the morning, took the stone which he had laid under his head, and set it up for a title, pouring oil upon the top of it . . . saying . . . the Lord shall be my God: and this stone which I have set up for a title, shall be called the house of God." (Ibid. 16–22.) Like the Royal Psalmist she says: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house; and the place where Thy glory dwelleth." (Ps. xxv. 8.) And, like King

Solomon, who exhausted all the treasures of his kingdom in order to provide such a glorious temple for the honor of God, she deems nothing too good for the Master's House. And even if her poor resources will not allow her to approach the magnificence her heart desires, she gives of her best with the sincere intention of honoring the Lord and Master of all. For, "Thus saith the Lord: heaven is My throne, and the earth My footstool. What is this house that you will build to Me? and what is this place of My resting? My hand made all these things, and all these things were made, saith the Lord. But to whom shall I have respect but to him that is poor and little, and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at My words?" (Is. lxvi. 1, 2.)

With what awe, reverence, and devotion, then, should we not always conduct ourselves in the holy temple of God, especially during the celebration of the divine mysteries. With what delight should we not look forward to visiting this holy place to send up our prayers to heaven, not by angels, as in Jacob's vision, but by Jesus Himself! With what affection and gratitude we should regard the house of Our Father in heaven, where we were regenerated by the saving waters of Baptism

and became brothers of Jesus Christ! Here we were consoled, comforted, and forgiven in the holy sacrament of Penance when we humbly and sorrowfully confessed how we had forgotten or neglected our holy calling and election. Here we were strengthened and enlightened by the formal visitation of the Holy Spirit of God in the sacrament of Confirmation. Here we are fed upon the food of angels, the Bread of Life. Here we solemnly dedicated ourselves to the service of God in in the state of life to which He called us. Here our sighs and tears go forth and all our petitions are answered by the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour. Here the precious blood of Jesus intercedes for us at all times, but especially during the renewal of the august sacrifice of Calvary in the Holy Mass. Here we hope to enjoy the last blessing of our holy mother the Church pronounced over our bodies when our souls shall have gone to meet our Creator and reap its benefit.

Let us, then, often sigh and pray with the Psalmist: "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God" (Ps. lxxxiii. 2); "Better is one day in thy

courts above thousands. I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners." (Ibid. 11.)

We should deem it a great privilege to be allowed to contribute to the cost and maintenance of our church, which, even though it should surpass a thousand times the magnificence of Solomon's temple, would still fall far short of what it should be. As Solomon himself said: "Is it, then, to be thought that God should indeed dwell upon earth? For if heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built?" (3 Kings viii. 27.) Thus we can say with the Psalmist: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house; and the place where thy glory dwelleth." (Ps. xxv. 8.)

IV

THE SIGN OF THE SON OF MAN

THE CROSS

"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. vi. 14.)

Of all the sensible signs made use of by Holy Church in order to keep before the minds of her children the sacred teachings of our holy Faith there is none of which she is so justly proud, or of which she is so lavish in her expression, as that of the holy cross. And of all her conventional signs and symbols there is none of such antiquity, none so nearly approaching a purely natural sign, or which has been at different times and in different circumstances so suggestive of opposite emotions.

Nearly every ancient nation, as far back as the light of history or of tradition can reveal, had at one time or another a profound reverence for the sign of the cross. They fashioned the emblem out of wood, stone, and all kinds of materials, and it was for them a

lucky omen, the symbol of life, hope, and immortality.

Many samples of the actual crosses used by various nations of remote antiquity have been recovered by explorers, but by far the most ancient and the most interesting examples are to be found in a rocky valley or pass near Mount Sinai, called "The Written Valley" from the fact that the rocks on both sides are covered with inscriptions in some unknown tongue. The cross frequently appears among these signs. Some authorities say that these characters were traced by the Israelites at the time of their flight out of Egypt under the leadership of Moses, and that the symbol referred to is the ancient Egyptian letter Tau, or T, which exactly represents a cross and was the sign amongst the ancients of life, fruitfulness, success, and prosperity.

The symbol was the very same for the last letter of the ancient Hebrew alphabet, according to St. Jerome and others, who comment on a very definite reference to this mystic sign in Holy Scripture where the prophet Ezechiel relates a vision in which he saw the abominations of Jerusalem, and was told to mark the letter Tau on the foreheads of those that grieved for them, so that they might be spared

amidst the general destruction, for the executioners were commanded: "Utterly destroy old and young, maidens, children, and women: but upon whomsoever you shall see Tau, kill them not." (ix. 6.) Hence even in the time of this prophet the mystic sign was evidently regarded as a sacred symbol of divine protection, and was indeed a prophetic figure of the salvation that was afterward to be accomplished by the holy cross of Christ.

By a strange contradiction the cross came to be regarded at the same time as a sign of disgrace and calamity when the custom arose of crucifying criminals. It was in this sense that our divine Lord Himself referred to the cross as a sign of humiliation and suffering, as when He said: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." (Matt. xvi. 24.) And thus it was that when He at length shed His precious blood upon the cross for our sakes, and forever consecrated that sacred emblem as the sign of eternal life and the only hope of our salvation, for "neither is there salvation in any other" (Acts iv. 12), it became to those whose eyes were blind to the glory of the true Faith, instead of an instrument by which Christ wished to "draw all things to himself" (John xii. 32),

what St. Peter calls "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of scandal" (1 Peter ii. 8), and St. Paul "unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness." (1 Cor. i, 23.)

But by His glorious resurrection our blessed Saviour triumphantly overcame the wickedness of foolish men and raised the standard of the cross to the highest dignity and the greatest glory. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself," He said. (John xii. 32.) Thus He made that sacred emblem the hope and joy of all true believers, and the terror and despair of the wicked and their deceiver the devil. On the last day the power and the glory of the cross will be publicly manifested before heaven, earth, and hell, for "then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty" (Matt. xxiv. 30), to judge the living and the dead. Then in the presence of that sacred sign the sins of nations as well as of individuals will be made manifest, the ways of the wicked will be fully exposed, and Christ will "convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment" (John xvi. 8), so that all may see and acknowledge

the wisdom of God and the power and glory of the cross, as St. Paul so beautifully explains: "The word of the cross, to them indeed that perish, is foolishness; but to them that are saved, that is, to us, it is the power of God. For it is written: I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world, by wisdom, knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of our preaching, to save them that believe. For both the Jews require signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness: But unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, the power of God, and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Cor. i. 18–25.)

Even after Christ had by His resurrection triumphantly established the glory of the cross, and proved it to be the grand source and effective cause of salvation and eternal life, his followers dared not until long afterward openly manifest for the sacred symbol that

veneration and respect which their hearts desired. In spite of the life and miracles of our Redeemer the hard-hearted Jews still refused to believe in Him, and were ever ready to mete out the severest punishment to His professed followers, as were also the pagan authorities.

This was the case not only in the very first years of the spread of Christianity, but for hundreds of years afterward. In fact, there was a regular organized series of the most dreadful persecutions carried out under various Roman emperors in which thousands of holy men and women were subjected to the most cruel torments and death for their refusal to deny Christ and sacrifice to the false gods of their heathen persecutors.

In spite of all the early Christians suffered, however, they loved all the more their holy Faith and everything connected with it, as is clear from the numerous drawings and inscriptions found in the catacombs, or hidden underground passages, where they fled for safety and met in secret for the celebration of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the reception of the sacraments, and the hearing of the word of God which holy and zealous popes and bishops never ceased to preach to them for their instruction, consolation, and encouragement.

They loved to trace the sacred Name of Jesus in mystic hidden characters known only to themselves, as when, for instance, they used the drawing of a fish to represent the Saviour, because the Greek word for fish is composed of the initial letters of Christ's Holy Name and title in the same language. In the same way they fashioned for themselves little crosses of wood, metal, or stone, and wore them secretly inside their garments. Their devotion to the cross was signified by the epithet "cross-lovers," applied to them by their pagan neighbors, who also frequently referred to them as "fishes" on account of their use of the mystic sign just mentioned.

A pathetic and beautiful example of their custom of carrying about them these holy emblems is found in the incident which led to the martyrdom of the holy Roman soldier Orestes. He was an expert athlete and when taking part one day in a contest his exertions caused the little cross which he wore upon his breast to escape from his bosom. This immediately proclaimed him to be a Christian, and on his refusing when challenged to offer incense to the false gods of his accusers, he was put to death.

The Jews had always expected the Messias

to be a great king who would restore the throne of Israel in royal magnificence and worldly splendor, little thinking that His Kingdom was not to be of this world. "My kingdom is not of this world," said Jesus to Pilate; "If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now My kingdom is not from hence." (John xviii. 36.) And when they saw Him whom they had so joyously saluted on Palm Sunday as "the Son of David, blessed in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxi. 9), nailed to the disgraceful cross and dying between two thieves, all their preconceived ideas received a rude shock, and the very idea of the cross became to them "a stumbling-block and a rock of scandal."

Neither did the Gentiles take kindly to the cross, for they were bitterly opposed to the use of images of any kind on account of the prevalence of idolatry at the time; and moreover, they looked upon the punishment of crucifixion as being the lowest depth of infamy for the victim. Thus it was that Paul said the cross was "unto the Gentiles foolishness." But as "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men," according to the same Apostle, so

the cross at length became "the power of God and the wisdom of God," for one of the Roman emperors became a most devout Christian in the person of Constantine the Great, who was converted by a most wonderful miracle. This took place near Rome on the eve of his greatest battle, in which he was opposed by the tyrant Maxentius with a much superior force. Constantine, though not yet a Christian, piously invoked the aid of the one true God, and his prayer was rewarded by two miraculous manifestations. In broad daylight both he and his whole army beheld an immense bright cross of light stretched across the heavens, with the inscription, "In this sign thou shalt conquer." The following night he had a vision in which he saw the Redeemer with a similar sign and was told to have a standard made after the same pattern, which was to be borne in front of his army in battle. This he did and he was completely victorious. Needless to say, he was ever afterwards devoted in every possible way to the veneration of the holy cross. It was through his suggestion and assistance that his holy mother, Helena, went to Jerusalem, where she discovered the true cross on which our blessed Saviour died.

After such a wonderful manifestation of the power of the cross, the Emperor was anxious to show his love and veneration for the holy places which had been the scenes of the life and sufferings of our Redeemer, and so he conceived the idea of building a magnificent church in Jerusalem itself. St. Helena was anxious to visit the holy places themselves and endeavor to find some trace of the true cross. With this object in view she made many inquiries and at last discovered the place where the instruments of the Crucifixion had been buried. Thus she found three crosses, the nails, and the inscription or title which had originally been fixed to the cross on which Christ was crucified. But, as the title was found apart from the crosses, the latter were applied successively to a sick person and though two had no effect the third caused an immediate and miraculous cure.

After this the triumph of the cross was assured, and Christians were no longer afraid to show openly their love and veneration for the sacred emblem of man's redemption. They emblazoned the holy symbol on their banners, traced it on their foreheads and on their breasts, and marked their door-posts with it as an earnest of the divine protection;

they set up crosses in all their public places, in their houses, market-places, and cemeteries, an example of holy zeal which should animate the devotion and inflame the hearts of some of the cold-hearted Christians of the present day.

How appropriate it is, then, that our holy mother the Church should raise this holy standard of Christ high above the house where He dwells. Wherever we go we may always recognize from afar the house of God and the gate of heaven, its tall spire pointing as a guiding finger to our true home in heaven, the sacred emblem of the cross surmounting it as a beacon-light directing our steps by the paths of prayer, penance, and mortification to the feet of our crucified Saviour: for, as the "Imitation of Christ" says: "In the cross is the height of virtue; in the cross is the perfection of sanctity. There is no health of the soul, nor hope of eternal life, but in the cross. . . . Behold the cross is all, and in dying to thyself all consists; and there is no other way to life, and to true internal peace, but the way of the holy cross, and of daily mortification. Go where thou wilt, seek what thou wilt, and thou shalt not find a higher way above, nor a safer

way below, than the way of the holy cross." (Bk. ii. Ch. xii.)

Hence it is that the Church is so lavish in her use of this holy symbol, for, as it is the instrument of our salvation and the very test by which we shall be judged before all men, she is anxious that we should now look up toward it for guidance, courage, and strength. "Look up and lift up your heads," she says to us, "for your redemption is at hand." (Luke xxi. 28.) As the cross will be a sign of reproach to the infidel and the sinner on the last day, it will be a source of triumph to the man of faith and piety, for he will share in the victory of Christ even as he shared in His sufferings by devoutly carrying his cross through life. Then they who during life were misrepresented, ill-judged, and afflicted will be fully justified in the blessed sight of their Divine Master and Model, and the wicked children of the world who despised them will be forced to acknowledge their mistake. "Then shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them," says the Wise Man, "and taken away their labors. These, seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of

their unexpected salvation. Saying within themselves, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they, whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints." (Wis. v. 1-5.)

V

A CLEAN OBLATION

THE SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

"In every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation." (Malach. i. 11.)

All things belong to God, for He alone created them. "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof: the world and all that dwell therein," says the Psalmist. (Ps. xxiii. 1.) Hence it is the constant duty or business of all created things to acknowledge in a suitable manner their origin, existence, and dependence by continually praising and glorifying their Creator. "All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord, praise and exalt Him above all forever" sang the children in the fiery furnace, as they called upon the sun, moon, and stars, the sea and the land, the beasts, fowls, birds, and fishes, and all things created, to join them in their sublime hymn of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving to God "blessed in the firmament of heaven: and worthy of praise, and glorious forever." (Dan. iii. 5, 6.)

All created things, therefore, must adore Almighty God according to their nature—inanimate objects and the brute creation by fulfilling the end for which they were made; the angels and "the spirits of the just made perfect" (Heb. xii. 23) by ministering to Him before His throne in heaven, "resting not day and night, saying: Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and who is to come." (Apoc. iv. 8.)

But mortal man, being composed of a body and soul, and made to God's likeness, must offer due worship according to his twofold nature—according to his spiritual nature by humble adoration "in spirit and in truth" (John iv. 24); and according to his material nature by some outward visible expression of his sentiments in exterior acts.

From the very beginning there was implanted in the heart of man a natural desire of expressing his sentiments of homage toward his Creator by that very special outward act or ceremony known as *sacrifice*, by which is meant the destruction, partial or entire, or the change of some sensible thing in order to acknowledge the sovereign power of God and His supreme dominion over all created things.

Hence we find that "Cain offered, of the

fruits of the earth, gifts to the Lord. Abel also offered of the firstlings of his flock." (Gen. iv. 3, 4.) After the deluge "Noe built an altar unto the Lord: and taking of all cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar." (Gen. viii. 20.) Melchisedech, king of Salem, offered sacrifice of bread and wine; and Abraham would have sacrificed his only son Isaac but that God, who had commanded him to do so in order to try his obedience, was so pleased with his devotion and ready will to obey that He miraculously provided another victim. (Gen. xxii.)

It is clear, therefore, that Almighty God is pleased with the outward act of sacrifice as well as with the inward motive or intention of which it is the expression. "The Lord hath respect to Abel, and to his offerings" (Gen. iv. 4), says Holy Scripture: and when Noe offered sacrifice "the Lord smelled a sweet savor, and said: I will no more curse the earth for the sake of man." (Gen. viii. 21.)

God afterward formally approved of the official act of sacrifice by a lawfully appointed minister and laid down the most minute directions as to the nature of the victim, the manner of offering it, and the ceremonies to be used, in the law given to Moses. Moreover,

He clearly showed that not only was the act of sacrifice pleasing to Him, but that it was an enormous crime to prevent the offering of it. "Wherefore," says Holy Scripture, referring to such a crime on the part of the sons of Heli, who "were children of Belial, not knowing the Lord, nor the office of the priests to the people" (1 Kings ii. 12, 13), "the sin of the young men was exceeding great before the Lord: because they withdrew men from the sacrifice of the Lord." (v. 17.) At the same time He promises rich blessings to all those who take part in such holy offerings: "I will bring them into My holy mount, and will make them joyful, in My house of prayer: their holocausts, and their victims, shall please Me upon My altar: for My house shall be called the house of prayer, for all nations." (Is. lvi. 1.)

There is, then, in the act of sacrifice a destruction or at least a change, either partial or complete, of some sensible object or substance, with appropriate accompanying reverence which is generally expressed, and naturally so, by a more or less elaborate ceremonial. And the object of the sacrificial act is to acknowledge the supreme dominion of the Creator and Lord of all things, our gratitude for

the favors He has conferred upon us, our sorrow for our sins and our desire to atone for them "that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid." (Heb. iv. 16.) The ends of sacrifice are, therefore, briefly, praise, thanks, mercy, and help.

But still all the honor which all created beings could offer to Almighty God for all time would be very far short of the glory that is due to Him, for He is worthy of an infinite sacrifice which it would be impossible for created beings of themselves ever to hope to offer Him. Hence Almighty God was pleased to receive for a time such finite honor as "the weak and needy elements" (Gal. iv. 9) of the Old Law could supply. But he had something more worthy of Himself in view, of which all the ancient sacrifices were but a shadow and a figure, as is graphically foretold by the prophet Malachy: "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts: and I will not receive a gift of your hand. For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation." (Mal. i. 10, 11.) This was to be no less than the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the sacrifice of the most precious

body and blood of His own divine Son, our Lord Jesus Christ made man, to be offered continually on our altars throughout the whole world, as has now literally come to pass, for at every hour of the day and night the Holy Mass is being offered in some part of the globe, whether in the frozen regions of the north, or in sunny southern lands, or along the belt of the equator. "For it is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away," says St. Paul, speaking of the ancient sacrifices and their value in view of the future merits of Christ, upon the promise of which the efficacy of even these poor substitutes depended, "wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not: but a body Thou hast fitted to Me: Holocausts for sin did not please Thee: Then said I: Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of Me: that I should do Thy will, O God." (Heb. x. 4–7.)

The will of our divine Saviour was that He should be at once both the Priest and the Victim of a sacrifice to His Eternal Father for the sins of men: and so He "humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Eph. ii. 8), thus rendering us capable of sharing in the powerful

merits and intercession of a sacrifice of infinite value, for Jesus was both God and man, and "we are made partakers of Christ" (Heb. iii. 14). In Him, therefore, "we have a great high priest that hath passed into the heavens" (Heb. iv. 14), who "hath loved us, and delivered Himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness" (Eph. v. 2), who "continueth forever, hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby He is able also to save forever them that come to God by Him; always living to make intercession for us . . . the Son who is perfected for evermore." (Heb. vii. 24–28.)

Christ has accordingly an everlasting priesthood, and must of necessity, therefore, constantly renew on our behalf the same holy sacrifice which He consummated on Mount Calvary, for to be a priest without offering sacrifice is a contradiction in terms. As St. Paul says: "Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that he also should have something to offer." (Heb. viii. 3.) This our great High Priest accomplishes by the renewal of the sacrifice of the cross in a mystic and unbloody manner in the holy sacrifice of the Mass offered daily on our altars according to the directions

which He gave to His apostles at the Last Supper: "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke xxii. 19), which St. Paul explains in detail as to the power and duty then conferred upon the priests of the New Law: "For I have received of the Lord," he says, "that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke, and said: Take ye, and eat: this is My body, which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come." (1 Cor. xi. 24–26.)

Hence though Christ "by one oblation hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x. 14) by shedding His precious blood upon the cross, yet the merits which He thus purchased for us must be applied to our souls by the offering of that "clean oblation" foretold by the prophet Malachy—the holy sacrifice of the Mass. As the essence of this mystic offering consists in the separate consecration of the elements of bread and wine, by which the separation of the soul and body of Christ in His death is signified, and the offering of the same to Almighty God by His duly

appointed minister, who represents Christ Himself in the sacrificial act, the efficacy of the Holy Mass depends not upon the personal dignity or sanctity of the minister but upon the merits, dignity, and promises of Jesus Himself, who is at the same time both the Priest and the Victim—a Priest of infinite dignity and a Victim of infinite worth. Hence it is said that the fruits of the Mass are in this sense of infinite value to the faithful in general as an act of impetration or prayer on their behalf.

For those, however, who actually assist at the offering of the holy sacrifice and thus personally co-operate with the priest celebrating, there is in addition a general fruit of a special character which depends on their own good dispositions. If, however, the Mass is offered for the benefit of some particular person or persons, living or dead, there is applied to them a special fruit of impetration or prayer (which the sanctity and good dispositions of the priest assist according to his merits) but also of propitiation and satisfaction by virtue of the merits of Christ (apart altogether from the personal value of the priest's suffrage) which is very precious in the sight of Almighty God. Thus, whenever we ask a priest to say Mass

for our special intention, whether it be for the acquisition of some spiritual or temporal favor for ourselves, for the repose of the soul of some relation or friend, or as an act of thanksgiving for favors received, the Mass is, as it were, our own. But we must not confuse the special merits which are thereby due to us with the granting of any special petition for which we offer it. We must entrust this to the divine providence of God, who will always give us what is best for us.

Whilst it is customary to make an offering to the priest on asking him for such a special favor, we must never forget that the offering is not the price of the Mass and that the priestly office can neither be bought nor sold. The Mass itself is of infinite value, not only "a pearl of great price," but above and beyond all price. Hence we should show our regard for the dignity of the holy sacrifice and also for the personal feelings of the priest by presenting our offering in a respectful and unobtrusive manner, not asking such indelicate questions as "How much is the charge?" or "What is the price?" It is best to place the usual offering in an envelope with your name attached, or at least to have it ready to hand, thus saving the awkwardness of causing the

priest to wait while you search your purse or your pocket.

In obedience to the precept of our divine Master, as Holy Scripture as well as the history of the early Church relates, the apostles were in the habit of frequently celebrating Mass, especially on the Lord's Day, when they also preached and gave instructions to the people. Thus St. Luke relates: "On the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread, Paul discoursed with them." (Acts xx. 7.) Thus the custom was continued, with the use of appropriate reverence and suitable accompanying ceremonies, "all things being done decently and according to order" (1 Cor. xiv. 40), as St. Paul had commanded, from the days when the holy sacrifice was offered in secret in the upper room at Jerusalem and in the catacombs of ancient Rome, down to our own day, when "in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation." (Mal. i. 11.)

Yes, "the chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? and the bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" (1 Cor. x. 16). How grateful should we not be, then, that we can assist as often as we wish

at this wonderful sacrifice and take such an active part in thus honoring Almighty God! How anxious we should be to secure such a privilege as frequently as possible! How reverent and devout we should be during its celebration! How great should be our respect and veneration for the Church in which it is offered up, for the priest who offers it, and for everything connected with such holy mysteries! As "The Imitation of Christ" says, "If this most holy sacrament were celebrated in only one place, and consecrated only by one priest in the world, with what great longing thinkest thou would men be affected toward that place and to such a priest of God, that they might see the divine mysteries celebrated! But now there are made many priests, and Christ is offered up in many places, that the grace and love of God to man may appear so much the greater the more widely this communion is spread throughout the world." (Bk. iv. Ch. i.)

VI

THE HOLY TABLE

THE ALTAR

"We have an altar whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle." (Heb. xiii. 10.)

WHENEVER we find mention of sacrifice we always find mention also of a special table or altar on which the priest offered the sacred victim according to some appropriate rite or ceremonial. Thus we read in Holy Scripture that after the deluge Noe "built an altar unto the Lord: and taking of all cattle and fowls that were clean, offered holocausts upon the altar." (Gen. viii. 20.) Whilst we find that definite and detailed directions were given by Almighty God to Moses with regard to the consecration of the altar, so that it should be regarded as something very specially connected with the service of the priesthood and intimately associated in the minds of all with the honor and respect due to so great and august an act of religion—

"Seven days shalt thou expiate the altar and sanctify it, and it shall be most holy. Every one that shall touch it shall be holy." (Exod. xxix. 37.)

To show honor to the altar was accordingly regarded as the highest act of religion next to the offering of the sacrifice itself. Kings and princes vied with one another in the number and splendor of their gifts for its use and ornamentation. It is related that "these were the offerings made by the princes of Israel in the dedication of the altar, in the day wherein it was consecrated: Twelve dishes of silver: twelve silver bowls: twelve little mortars of gold: each dish weighing a hundred and thirty sicles of silver, and each bowl seventy sicles: that is, putting all the vessels of silver together, two thousand four hundred sicles, by the weight of the sanctuary. Twelve little mortars of gold full of incense, weighing ten sicles apiece, by the weight of the sanctuary: that is, in all a hundred and twenty sicles of gold," as well as great numbers of lambs, sheep and cattle for the various sacrifices. (Num. vii.)

If the altars of the Old Law were thus regarded with such respect and devotion and were made the objects of such reverent care for their due preparation and adornment, what are

Christians to think of the Holy Table on which the unspeakable sacrifice of the most precious body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ is offered by the hands of His anointed minister, His personal representative, who acts in His name and by His authority, so that God Himself is both Priest and Victim? The altars of the Old Law were used for the offering of the blood of animals and other created things. Such sacrifices were indeed pleasing to Almighty God for a time, and served to remove from those who assisted at them certain legal disabilities which they had incurred by their transgression of the law, as well as to obtain God's mercy in view of the future merits of the Redeemer who was to come; for, as St. Paul says, "The former indeed had also justifications of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary." (Heb. ix. 1.) But the altars of the New Law are consecrated to a higher service and are used for an infinitely more noble sacrifice. "Christ being come," says the same Apostle, "a high priest of the good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hand, that is, not of this creation: neither by the blood of goats, or of calves, but by His own blood, entered once into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats and of oxen, and the ashes of an heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled, to the cleansing of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who by the Holy Ghost offered himself unspotted unto God, cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" (Heb. ix. 11–14.) And so St. Paul concludes: "We have an altar, whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle." (Heb. xiii. 10.)

With what sentiments of love and appreciation our holy mother the Church regards this inestimable gift may be seen from the wonderful precautions which she uses and the scrupulous care which she exercises in the arrangement and decoration of her altars; in the selection and composition of her liturgy, or order of prayers; in the sacred and solemn nature of her ritual, or order of ceremonies, so that everything connected with the Holy Table of the Eucharistic Sacrifice may be as worthy as she can possibly contrive to make it in view of the august purpose for which it was entrusted to her care.

In the beginning, as we should naturally expect, the altar was very simply constructed, being generally made of wood, as the holy

sacrifice was usually offered in the private houses of the faithful. Afterward, when the Christians were forced to assemble in the catacombs, or underground secret passages, on account of the various fierce persecutions that were carried out under the Roman emperors, Mass was offered on the tombs of the martyrs who had so gloriously died for the sake of their divine Master and whose remains had always, when possible, been brought thither and reverently entombed. The marble slab which covered the tomb made an appropriate as well as a convenient altar.

Later on, when, through the conversion of Constantine the Great, the faithful had perfect freedom in the exercise of their holy religion, and the small underground sanctuaries were unable to accommodate their rapidly increasing numbers, they began to build churches and temples everywhere. They were still anxious to have the divine mysteries celebrated over the tombs of the apostles and martyrs, but did not like to remove the sacred relics from their hallowed resting-places; so they contrived to build their churches in such positions that the altar was directly over the very spot where the relics of the saint in whose honor the church was dedicated were already entombed. After-

ward a passage was made which led down by a flight of steps to the actual little room or sanctuary where the holy sacrifice had originally been offered on the tomb itself. This space was called the "confession," on account of the fact that the holy martyr had laid down his life in such a glorious confession of the Faith which he professed. Hence the origin of such feasts as that of the "Confession of St. Peter."

As soon as the early Christians had perfect freedom in the selection of the sites for their churches, they aimed at two chief points; namely, that the church itself should run due east and west and that the entrance as well as the altar should always face the east. This arrangement is still to be observed in many churches of the present day, especially in Rome; as, for instance, in St. Peter's, where the Sovereign Pontiff faces the people as he celebrates Mass at the great altar, which stands out from the walls of the sanctuary and looks toward the entrance of the church, which also faces the east.

This idea originated in the hands of the early Christians from the many and varied beautiful prophetic references to the Messias in Holy Scripture, where He is mystically described

as "the Orient," "the Sun of Justice," and the "Light" of the Gentiles. "Behold, I will bring my servant the Orient," says the prophet Zachary (iii. 8). "The Orient from on high hath visited us, to enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; to direct our feet into the way of peace," says St. Luke (i. 78, 79). As the sun rises in the east to give light to the world, so Christ, the Son of Justice, rose to bring the light of salvation to the Gentiles. "Unto you that fear My name," says the prophet Malachy, "the Sun of Justice shall arise, and health in his wings." (iv. 2.) This was "He that was born King of the Jews" whom the three Wise Men of the east sought, saying, "We have seen His star in the east and are come to adore Him" (Matt. ii. 2); "A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel" (Luke ii. 32), according to holy Simeon. And not to the Gentiles only but "the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world" according to St. John. (i. 9.) "I am the light of the world," says Christ Himself, "he that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John viii. 12). "Whereunto you do well to attend," says St. Peter, "as to a light that shineth in a dark

place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." (2 Peter i. 19.)

With what sentiments of joyful hope and eager anticipation should we not, then, look toward the altar as our guiding light, with what feelings of reverence and devotion should we not salute as we pass that sacred house where the light of God's presence still directs us and the rays of hope are never extinguished, for it contains "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life," the light of heaven itself, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. For, though in these days it is not always practicable to have the church or the altar facing the east, we are reminded in many other ways that the true Sun of Justice shines from the sanctuary. Even the dim rays of the ever-burning lamp which betokens the presence of Jesus in the tabernacle is to us a bright star of faith, a beacon of hope and an earnest of the rich warm love of the Sacred Heart of our blessed Saviour.

The consecration of an altar is a splendid and elaborate ceremonial. After the example of the first Christians, who always had the Holy Mass celebrated over the tombs of the martyrs, as well as to give us an example of suffering and sacrifice for the love of our

divine master, who is about to be offered up as the Sacred Victim, the Church ordains that Mass can not be celebrated unless there is provided for the altar proper at least a slab stone in which there are enclosed the relics of some saint or martyr. In this altar-stone, as it is called, there is cut out a little tomb or space in which the sacred relics are sealed up by the consecrating prelate. The stone, or the fixed marble altar, as the case may be, is then anointed with holy oil, after the example of Jacob, who, after his vision, "arising in the morning, took the stone, which he had laid under his head, and set it up for a title, pouring oil upon the top of it" (Gen. xxviii. 18); and of Moses, who was commanded by Almighty God to anoint in a similar manner the altars of the tabernacle: "Thou shalt make the holy oil of unction, an ointment compounded after the art of the perfumer, and therewith thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the testimony, and the ark of the testament, and the table with the vessels thereof, the candlestick and furniture thereof, the altars of incense, and of holocaust, and all the furniture that belongeth to the service of them. And thou shalt sanctify all, and they shall be most holy." (Ex. xxx. 25–29.) During the ceremony

many beautiful prayers are recited, such as that of the holy bishop St. Ambrose: "O Lord, I now beseech Thee to look down as daily High Priest upon this Thy house; upon these altars which are this day dedicated; upon these spiritual stones, in each of which a sensible temple is consecrated to Thee; and may Thy divine mercy receive the prayers of Thy servants that are poured out to Thee in this place. Let every sacrifice which is offered up in this temple with an entire and pious care be unto Thee as an odor of sanctification."

Thus, as St. Gregory observes, "this holy altar at which we assist is constructed of stone, which by nature is common, nothing different from other flags of stone with which the walls of our houses are encrusted, and our pavements are ornamented. But because it is consecrated and dedicated to the worship of God, and has received a benediction, it is a holy table, an immaculate altar, which is no longer to be touched by all, but by priests only, and even by them with veneration."

As our holy mother the Church is so extremely careful in the preparation and adornment of her temples and her altars, with a view to securing the reverence and respect which so great an act of religion as the cele-

bration of Mass demands, she is also most anxious that the actual celebration of the holy sacrifice should be surrounded and accompanied by a fitting ritual and liturgy. Hence, though the essence of the sacrifice itself practically consists in the words of consecration and the subsequent communion of the priest, she has ordered that certain prayers and ceremonies should precede, accompany, and follow the actual sacrifice. These may be briefly classified as the *preparation,* the *action,* and the *thanksgiving.*

The *preparation* consists of the psalms and prayers recited at the foot of the altar, the Introit, the Epistle, and the Gospel. The *action* consists of the Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion. And the *thanksgiving* consists of the last prayers, the blessing, and the last Gospel. Hence, to hear Mass validly it is necessary to assist at the *action* of the sacrifice, that is, from the Offertory to the end of the Communion. As we shall afterward see, when the Church commands us under pain of sin "to hear Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation," she expects us to assist at the entire ceremony, that is, from the very beginning to the very end, but under varying degrees of obligation.

The beautiful and impressive ritual and liturgy employed in the celebration of the holy Mass tend to raise our minds to a realization of the great mystery at which we are privileged to assist, which is no less than the mystic renewal of the great sacrifice of the cross. The priest ascending the altar, clothed in solemn vestments marked with the sign of the cross, the crucifix above, the altar itself, the prayers, genuflections, the multiplied signs of the cross made by the priest and frequently also by those who assist, all combine to impress upon us the fact that we are joining in offering to the Eternal Father His own Divine Son Jesus who died upon the cross for our salvation and that "neither is there salvation in any other." (Acts iv. 12.)

Let us, then, as often as we have the privilege of assisting at this wonderful sacrifice, look toward the altar as to the holy hill of Calvary, and see thereon the Divine Victim being offered for our sins. Let us pray with the priest, whose first action on ascending the altar is to kiss the stone that incloses the sacred relics and say: "We beseech thee, O Lord, by the merits of Thy saints whose relics are here, and of all the saints, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to forgive me all my sins." Afterward

let us imitate the sentiments of lively faith and true contrition of that "multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, returned striking their breasts." (Luke xxiii. 48.)

VII

GOLDEN CANDLESTICKS

ORNAMENTS OF THE ALTAR

"And the golden candlesticks, five on the right hand and five on the left, over against the oracle of pure gold: and the flowers like lilies, and the lamps over them of gold." (3 Kings vii. 49.)

SEEING the wonderful dignity of the Christian sanctuary and altar, it is no wonder that our holy mother the Church pays most particular attention to the proper adornment of each, especially during the time of Mass, when the holy sacrifice is actually being offered. She takes pattern accordingly from the designs and follows as far as she can the arrangements and directions of Almighty God Himself with regard to the temple and tabernacle of the Old Law. But she ever remembers that her altar and her sanctuary are as far above those "weak and needy elements" (Gal. iv. 9) as God Himself is above His crea-

tures: and that as the Old Law itself was but "a shadow of the good things to come" (Heb. x. 1), so whatever she can contrive in order to show forth the glory of God upon her altars is but a token of what is really due to them, and is, after all, merely suggestive of those sentiments of awe and reverence as well as of love and devotion which she desires to infuse into the hearts of her children as they assist at this august sacrifice.

As we have already seen, the altar itself must consist of at least a stone consecrated by a bishop and containing the relics of some saint or martyr. When the holy sacrifice is about to be celebrated, three linen cloths, specially blessed by a bishop or by a priest having special permission, are spread over the entire table of the altar. These represent the linens with which the body of our blessed Saviour was enshrouded in the sepulcher and are also symbolical of the Blessed Trinity.

As the bread and wine are placed for the Offertory another linen cloth, called the *corporal,* is spread by the celebrant or his assistant minister. This is the special cloth upon which the Sacred Host actually rests from the Consecration to the Communion, and is so called from the Latin word *corpus,* which

means *body,* because it touches the Body of the Lord.

With regard to what may be called the furnishings of the altar, the most important is, of course, the crucifix. In the early days of Christianity the Church was very careful to avoid giving offense either to the Jews or to the Gentiles who had been converted. The former had such a loathing and contempt for criminals who suffered the disgraceful death of the cross, and the latter had such a deep-rooted objection to the use of images, that for a long time she did not publicly exhibit the crucifix, or figure of Christ hanging on the cross. By degrees, however, both classes gradually became accustomed to the idea of a crucified Saviour. At first the Redeemer was represented as "the Lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world." (Apoc. xiii. 8.) The description of this vision of St. John was portrayed in the paintings and sculptures of the period until at length the picture of a lamb bearing a cross, or bleeding at the foot of it, became familiar to them.

After the conversion of the Emperor Constantine an edict was issued which forbade the use of the cross as an instrument of punishment. From that time glory took the place of

shame with regard to the symbol of our redemption and honor began at last to be publicly shown to the figure of Christ nailed to the cross, and crucifixes, not mere crosses, began to be erected everywhere.

So intimately is the sacrifice of the cross connected with the holy sacrifice of the Mass that the Church ordains that the crucifix shall be the most prominent ornament upon her altars while Mass is being celebrated. Originally the altar was surmounted by a canopy, richly draped, and ornamented with gold and precious stones. Above this, if not on the holy table itself, the crucifix was fittingly placed as the standard of Christ, the sign of the Son of man, as a constant reminder to the faithful that the sacrifice of the Cross and the sacrifice of the Mass are essentially one and the same.

But more strictly ornamental in a sense, though none the less useful as symbols of "a greater and more perfect tabernacle" (Heb. ix. 11), are the other furnishings of the altar, such as the lights and flowers, the lamps and candles, so similar in their nature and signification to "the pattern that was shown to Moses in the mount" (Ex. xxv. 40), to the wonderful furniture of the altar in King Solomon's temple—"the altar of gold, and the table of

gold, upon which the loaves of proposition should be set: and the golden candlesticks, five on the right hand, and five on the left, over against the oracle of pure gold: and the flowers like lilies, and the lamps over them of gold" (3 Kings vii. 48, 49), and to the objects seen by St. John in his vision in the island of Patmos, as related in the Apocalypse, especially "the seven golden candlesticks" before the throne of the Lamb.

Though the use of lights in the sacred ceremonies is naturally a sign of joy and exultation, as well as of honor and respect to Him in whose presence they are used, these symbols have also a mystic spiritual significance as representing Our Lord Jesus Christ who said of Himself: "I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John viii. 12.) They represent the light of His divine doctrine: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death, light is risen" (Is. ix. 2); the light of His example: "the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world" (John i. 9); the light of His grace: "Watch whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not"

(Ibid. xii. 35); and the light of His glory: "The city hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon, to shine in it. For the glory of the Lord hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (Apoc. xxi. 23), "a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of His people Israel." (Luke ii. 32.)

Lights were used during the celebration of Mass even in the time of the apostles. "And on the first day of the week," says St. Luke, "when we were assembled to break bread, Paul discoursed with them . . . and there were a great number of lamps in the upper chamber where we were assembled" (Acts xx. 7, 8). From the earliest times the faithful vied with one another in presenting for the use of the altar and sanctuary in the celebration of the holy mysteries lamps and candlesticks of gold and silver, richly ornamented with jewels and precious stones, as well as oil and candles saturated with costly perfumes, which gave forth sweet and pleasant odors as they were consumed. These were used not merely on the altar and in the sanctuary but also in the administration of the sacraments and in other sacred functions, such as, for instance, at the reading or singing of the Gospel. According to St. Jerome: "Throughout all the churches

of the East, whenever the Gospel is to be recited, they bring forth lights, though it be at noon-day; not certainly to dispel darkness, but to manifest some sign of joy, that under the type of corporal light may be indicated that light of which we read in the Psalms: 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths.' (Ps. cxviii. 105.)"

What was once a pious custom practised as early as the fourth century is now an obligation of most serious importance with regard to the light which is kept constantly burning in presence of the Blessed Sacrament reserved in our tabernacles. The custom originally arose, no doubt, from the command given by Almighty God to Moses: "Command the children of Israel that they bring thee the purest oil of the olives, and beaten with a pestle: that a lamp may burn always in the tabernacle of the testimony, without the veil that hangs before the testimony. And Aaron and his sons shall order it, that it may give light before the Lord until the morning. It shall be a perpetual observance throughout their successions among the children of Israel." (Exod. xxvii. 21.) The lamp of the sanctuary where Jesus dwells now takes its place and is a beautiful symbol of the ever-burning and all-consuming love of the

Sacred Heart for the souls of men. When we enter a Catholic church the very warmth of its glow seems to speak to us of familiar union with our dear Redeemer in the sacrament of His love and is a symbol of His constant desire to dwell forever in the hearts of men, forcibly reminding us of that gracious invitation: "Come to Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi. 28.)

Lights of all kinds have, therefore, a beautiful and edifying significance, but the use of candles has a still further mystic meaning. It is prescribed by the Church that candles must be lighted on the altar during the whole time of Mass, and that they must be made of beeswax. The virgin bee gathers pure wax from the flowers: Christ took His most pure body from the virgin womb of His Most Blessed Mother. The wax represents the body of Christ, the wick His soul, and the light emanating from both combined signifies the human and the divine natures hypostatically united in the one Divine Person. Hence the lighted wax taper beautifully typifies Our Lord Jesus Christ, the essence of life and light, of hope and happiness —"Light has risen to the just, and joy to the right of heart" (Ps. cxvi. 11).

All this beautiful and rich symbolism is impressively expressed on the occasion of the blessing of the paschal candle on Easter Saturday, and is referred to in that most sublime and wonderful canticle which is solemnly sung during the ceremonies—called the *Exultet* from the first word, meaning *rejoice.* This is a specially prepared candle of extra large size, and is usually decorated or ornamented in an artistic manner. Before being blessed and lighted, it represents the dead body of Christ in the tomb. In its side are five incisions in the form of a cross, representing the five sacred wounds. In these are afterward inserted five grains of incense, representing the sweet spices with which the sacred body was embalmed before being placed in the tomb by Nicodemus and the holy women. When blessed and lighted it represents the joy, the glory, and the triumph of the Resurrection. It is lighted from a triple candle signifying the glorious and blessed Trinity, the three-branched candle having previously been lighted from fire struck from a flint and blessed with most solemn and interesting ceremonies.

During the singing of the *Exultet* the deacon refers to the enlightenment of the world with the brightness of the Eternal King and

especially to the joy of the Church "adorned with the brightness of so great a light," and prays that the paschal candle may dispel the darkness of sin and ignorance; that, like the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night which led the Israelites in safety through the desert and across the Red Sea, it may lead all to the true light of the Gospel of Christ. It is lighted during Mass on every Sunday from Easter to Ascension. On the latter Feast it is extinguished after the Gospel, in order to signify that on this day Christ ascended into heaven both body and soul, leaving the further preaching of the Gospel to the apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests of the Church.

Whenever we make gifts of candles for the use of the altar, therefore, we should always be careful to procure those of beeswax and not of paraffin or any other composition, if for no other reason than to preserve the symbolical significance which the Church has in view in her use of them. We should be careful also to present them in the proper spirit and with a good intention, so that by the light of God's grace we may appear pure and holy in His sight and "so let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify

our Father who is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.)

Flowers have always been regarded as beautiful emblems of purity and simplicity, in their varied hues rivaling the rich garments of kings and princes. "Consider the lilies of the field," says our Divine Master, "not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these." (Matt. vi. 28, 29.) In their silent praise they afford us a poetic and sweet example of uncomplaining devotion in the service of God. Hence they have always been used as appropriate adornments of the altar and sanctuary as well as of the church itself. They have also a mystic significance for us from the many references to them in Holy Scripture. Our Lord Himself was referred to by the prophet Isaias as "the root of Jesse" (xi. 10) and His Blessed Mother is referred to as "the flower of the field, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns" (Cant. ii. 1). Whilst the promises of God to His chosen ones are expressed in similar language by the prophet Osee: "I will be as the dew, Israel shall spring as the lily, and his root shall shoot forth as that of Libanus. His branches shall spread, and his glory shall be as the olive tree" (xiv. 6, 7) : and by the Preacher: "I was exalted like a palm

tree in Cades, and as a rose plant in Jericho." (Ecclus. xxiv. 18.)

What a glorious privilege it is, then, to be allowed to be a member of an association which has for its special object the care and adornment of the altar and sanctuary! In such a pious union the members devote themselves not merely to provide and keep in good condition the various necessaries and decorations, but they have frequently the privilege of arranging them within the sanctuary and even on the altar with their own hands. In providing and keeping in good condition the various vestments and sacred linens they are actually carrying out the same duties which it was the privilege of Mary and Joseph to discharge for the Child Jesus in the Holy House at Nazareth.

Rich tapestries and expensive ornaments are often provided by the rich. Kings and princes have spared nothing to provide a worthy dwelling for the King of Kings, but nothing they could do is more pleasing to Almighty God than the simple childlike faith and love by which we care for the precious body of His Divine Son by making some little gift with our own hands or by presenting such simple offer-

ings as candles or flowers for the use of His holy altar. Let us, then, at least subscribe to such an organization, if personal service is impossible, and we can say with the Psalmist: "I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy house; and the place where Thy glory dwelleth." (Ps. xxv. 8.)

VIII

OTHER GARMENTS

THE SACRED VESTMENTS

"There they shall lay their vestments wherein they minister, for they are holy, and they shall put on other garments, and so shall they go forth to the people." (Ezech. xlii. 14.)

Not only is our holy mother the Church concerned about the proper equipment and adornment of her altar, sanctuary, and temple, but she is, if possible, even more anxious that her sacred ministers, who discharge their solemn functions as the official representatives of Jesus Christ, should be clothed in becoming garments according to the sublime nature and exalted dignity of their divine office.

And she is persuaded of the importance of her ordinances in this respect by two chief considerations. First, because, as the Council of Trent says, "such is the nature of man that, without external helps he can not easily be

raised to the meditation of divine things"; and secondly, because such was the command of Almighty God Himself to the priests of the Old Law, and such has been the traditional custom even from apostolic times.

As it is appropriate that the public officials of the State should wear a distinctive dress, that the uniform of the soldier, the court dress of the nobleman, the robes of the judge, and the gown of the advocate should not only distinguish clearly their respective special functions, but should also lend dignity and claim respect on behalf of those who discharge them, how much more is it not only appropriate but necessary that the priest who appears before Almighty God as His official minister to discharge the most sublime and solemn duties toward his Creator should not only be attired as befits the exalted dignity which appertains to the holder of such an office but as a token of respect to the august nature of the very actions in which he is engaged and to the Master whom he represents. Present to the mind of any intelligent Catholic the bare idea of a priest offering the holy sacrifice of the Mass in his ordinary attire, special though it be, and observe what a preposterous proposition it seems to him. The Church accordingly ordains that

when her sacred ministers appear on the altar or in the sanctuary in their official capacity in the august presence of Almighty God they shall appear in their prescribed *court dress* according to their respective offices and functions, and, like the priests of the sanctuary in the vision of Ezechiel, "there they shall lay their vestments, wherein they minister, for they are holy: and they shall put on other garments, and so they shall go forth to the people." (xlii. 14.)

As in everything connected with the priestly functions of the Old Law, Almighty God laid down most minute directions with regard to the pattern, material, and use of the sacred vestments. Thus He commanded Moses: "Thou shalt make a holy vesture for Aaron thy brother: for glory and for beauty. And thou shalt speak to all the wise of heart, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom: that they may make Aaron's vestments, in which he being consecrated may minister to Me. And these shall be the vestments that they shall make: A rational and an ephod, a tunick and a strait linen garment, a miter and a girdle. They shall make the holy vestments for thy brother Aaron and his sons, that they may do the office of priesthood unto Me . . . And

they shall make the ephod of gold, and violet, and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine twisted linen, embroidered with divers colors. It shall have two edges joined in the top on both sides, that they may be closed together. The very workmanship also and all the variety of the work shall be of gold, and violet, and purple, and scarlet twice dyed, and fine twisted linen." (Ex. xxviii. 2–8.)

In accordance with the special dignity of his state, the priest wears a distinctive dress in every-day life, apart from the sacred vestments in which he officiates. His proper dress is the long black robe known as the *cassock,* or *soutane.* But in missionary countries it is not found convenient to wear such a dress out of doors, so the ordinary black clerical coat takes its place. The *Roman collar* is the distinctive sign of the priest. It is simply a plain white band folded down over a black stock.

The *biretta,* the well-known four-sided cap, with three raised peaks, emblematical of the Blessed Trinity, is worn in the house and may be worn even in the sanctuary during the less solemn portions of the sacred functions.

The *surplice,* or *cotta,* a garment of white linen with wide sleeves, is worn over the sou-

tane and is the privilege of all clerics, that is of those who have at least been admitted to the ecclesiastical state by the bishop in the ceremony of the conferring of the tonsure. During this ceremony the candidate's hair is cut by the bishop in the form of a cross, and the surplice, previously blessed, is then placed on him, whilst he repeats with the bishop the words: "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup: it is thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me." (Ps. xv. 5.) These words give an idea of the spiritual meaning of the garment which accordingly signifies the robe of innocence and purity which our divine Redeemer purchased for us by His death after the loss of our original inheritance by the fall of our first parents.

Owing to the scarcity of clerics, and much more of the higher orders, such as acolytes, who are ordained to serve Mass, boys of good character are by special privilege allowed to discharge this holy function, and even to wear the soutane and surplice whilst doing so. In granting this privilege the Church has in mind the example of Samuel, who "ministered before the face of the Lord: being a child girded with a linen ephod. And his mother made him a little coat, which she brought to him on

the appointed days, when she went up with her husband, to offer the solemn sacrifice. And Heli blessed Helcana and his wife." (1 Kings ii. 18–20.) Altar-boys, as they are now commonly called, should therefore be taught to appreciate this great privilege and so endeavor by their respectful demeanor on the altar, in the sanctuary, and in the sacristy, to edify all who see them and to sanctify themselves.

With regard to the sacred vestments properly so called it is necessary that they be specially blessed by a bishop or by a priest with his permission. Before putting them on, the priest who is about to vest first washes his hands, at the same time reciting the prayer: "Give to my hands, O Lord, a virtue that shall cleanse away every stain, so that I may be able to serve Thee with purity of soul and body." A similar ceremony was prescribed for the priests of the Old Law before they approached the altar to offer sacrifice—"Thou shalt make also a brazen laver with its foot, to wash in: and thou shalt set it between the tabernacle of the testimony and the altar. And water being put into it, Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet in it: when they are going into the tabernacle of the testi-

mony, and when they are to come to the altar, to offer on it incense to the Lord. Lest perhaps they die. It shall be an everlasting law to him, and to his seed." (Ex. xxx. 18–21.)

The *amice* is then put on. This is a large, rectangular piece of linen, with two strings at adjacent corners by which it is fastened at the neck. The priest rests it for a moment on his head, then lowers it immediately, draws it round his shoulders and makes it secure, saying at the same time the prayer: "Place upon my head, O Lord, the helmet of salvation, that I may be able to repel all the fiery darts of the evil one." This shows its spiritual meaning to be that expressed by St. Paul in the words: "In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation." (Eph. vi. 16, 17.) According to some, it also represents the cloth with which Jesus was blindfolded by the Jews when they struck Him, saying: "Prophesy unto us, O Christ, who it is that struck Thee." (Matt. xxvi. 68.) According to others, it is commemorative of the ephod of the Jewish priesthood, and of the sackcloth with which the Jews covered the head as a sign of mourning and penance. Accord-

ing to the official prayer of the Church, however, it signifies the helmet which the Christian must wear in order to repel successfully the attacks of the devil; namely, attention and circumspection, avoiding all distractions and all unbecoming thoughts during the holy sacrifice.

The *alb* is a long white linen garment reaching to the ground and completely enveloping the sacred minister. It signifies the white garment with which Jesus was clothed by King Herod when he mocked Him and sent Him back to Pilate (Luke xxiii. 11); also the robe of the martyrs seen by St. John in vision: "And one of the ancients answered and said to me: These that are clothed in white robes, who are they? and whence came they? And I said to him: My Lord, thou knowest. And he said to me: These are they who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and have made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and they serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne, shall dwell over them" (Apoc. vii. 13–15): and hence the robe of innocence, purity, and grace with which all true Christians should be clothed, as the priest expresses when he is putting it on, saying: "Make me

white, O Lord, and cleanse my heart, that I, being whitened in the blood of the Lamb, may enjoy eternal happiness." Again, according to some, this garment signifies the white garments in which Christ appeared to the apostles on the occasion of His transfiguration on Mount Thabor—"And He was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun: and His garments became white as snow." (Matt. xvii. 2.)

The alb is secured at the waist by the *cincture,* or *girdle,* which signifies holy purity of body and soul, the most important virtue for a priest. Whilst putting it around himself the priest prays: "Gird me, O Lord, with the girdle of purity, and quench in me the humor of concupiscence, that there may abide with me the virtue of continence and chastity."

There is frequent mention of the girdle in Holy Scripture. Thus, for instance, Isaias says of the Redeemer: "Justice shall be the girdle of His loins: and faith the girdle of His reins." (xi. 5.) Our Lord said to the disciples: "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands." (Luke xii. 35.) And St. Paul: "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth." (Eph. vi. 14.) The cincture also represents the cords

with which Jesus was bound and the whips with which He was scourged. It therefore signifies mortification and self-denial, the great safeguards of holy purity.

The *maniple,* worn depending from the left arm, was originally a piece of linen, used as a handkerchief, but later was made of the same rich material as the vestments. It is therefore a symbol of grief, contrition, and penance, as the prayer, said by the priest whilst putting it on, explains: "May I merit, O Lord, to bear the maniple of weeping and sorrow, that I may receive with joy the reward of my labor."

The *stole,* the emblem of priestly power, is worn by the deacon over the left shoulder, by the priest around the neck and crossed over the breast, by the bishop in the same manner but not crossed, and by the Pope in the same manner but always and everywhere, thus indicating the different degrees of the priestly office which each enjoys. When the bishop places the stole on the priest at ordination he says to him: "Receive the yoke of the Lord, for His yoke is sweet and His burden light." This indicates the gravity and the burden of the priestly office and at the same time foreshadows the joys and consolations of those who worthily discharge its sacred functions.

The stole is also symbolical of eternal life, as is expressed in the prayer said by the priest whilst putting it on: "Restore unto me, O Lord, the stole of immortality, which I lost by the fall of our first parents, that, though I am not worthy to approach Thy holy mysteries, I may merit an eternal reward."

The *chasuble,* the most important of the priestly vestments, represents the purple garment in which Christ was led to Calvary. It is worn only during the celebration of Mass, except on a few very rare occasions, such as on Holy Thursday, and in the procession of the Blessed Sacrament on the Feast of Corpus Christi. The chasuble is a symbol of love, obedience, and sacrifice, as the priest is reminded in the prayer which is said by him whilst vesting with it: "O Lord, who hast said: My yoke is sweet and My burden light, grant that I may so bear it that I may obtain Thy grace."

The *cope* is a full, flowing cloak fastened at the breast by a clasp and furnished with a semicircular piece of the same material to represent the hood with which it was originally provided. It is worn generally at Vespers and at Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

During the latter ceremony the *veil,* a long,

wide, rectangular piece of silk or other rich material, is placed on the shoulders over the cope, and the hands of the priest are covered with it as he holds the monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament and makes the sign of the cross with the Sacred Host over the people. The veil is used in a similar manner by the subdeacon when he holds up the paten at Solemn High Mass from the Offertory to the Communion.

As Mass is offered each day in honor of some feast or holy mystery of our divine Lord or His Blessed Mother, some angel, saint, or martyr, or according to some special season or even general period of the year, the Church wishes to impress upon us some idea of her prevailing general sentiment not merely by means of the special liturgy of the occasion but even by the very color of the vestments worn by her sacred ministers. For this purpose she makes use of five colors. *White* is significant of joy, glory, purity, innocence, and peace; hence used on feasts of Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin, angels, confessors and virgins. *Black* is the sign of mourning and sorrow; hence used in the offices of Good Friday and in Masses for the dead. *Violet* is the emblem of penance and mortification;

hence used in Advent and Lent and on vigils. ***Red,*** significant of blood and fire, is used at Pentecost and on feasts of the holy martyrs. ***Green,*** the ordinary natural color, is used on ordinary days to which no special importance is attached. It signifies hope and peace and the renewal of spiritual strength and vigor in the love and service of God.

The priestly vestments are therefore both "for glory and for beauty"—a most edifying source of holy thoughts and pious inspirations both for the sacred ministers themselves and for their devoted people. Clothed in his "vestiture of holiness" the priest on the altar is indeed "as an olive tree budding forth, and a cypress tree rearing itself on high, when he put on the robe of glory, and was clothed with the perfection of power. When he went up to the altar he honored the vestiture of holiness." (Ecclus. l. 11, 12.)

IX

THE VESSELS OF THE LORD

THE CHALICE, CIBORIUM, PYX, PALL, VEIL, BURSE, SACRARIUM

"Thou shalt take the oil of unction and anoint the tabernacle with its vessels, that they may be sanctified." (Ex. l. 9.)

THAT the various vessels used in connection with the sacrifices of the Old Law were not only reserved for the one holy purpose but were regarded as sacred objects themselves, which none but the priests were allowed to touch, is clear from the nature of the directions given by Almighty God to Moses in regard to their anointing and consecration: "Thou shalt take the oil of unction and anoint the tabernacle with its vessels, that they may be sanctified" (Exod. l. 9); as well as from these words of the prophet Isaias: "Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord." (lii. 11.)

In the New Law also there are various sacred vessels used in connection with the holy

sacrifice of the Mass and in the administration of the sacraments, particularly of the Holy Eucharist, which are in a far stricter and more literal sense "the vessels of the Lord." How careful, then, the Church must be in religiously dedicating and scrupulously preserving for the special service of Almighty God, and for no other, those holy vessels which are so intimately concerned with the precious body and blood of our divine Redeemer, is seen from the solemn and impressive ceremonial of their consecration and from the strict injunctions which she issues to their appointed guardians, the sacred ministers of the sanctuary, who alone are permitted even to touch them.

The most sacred and important of all are of course the *chalice,* or cup, in which the precious blood is consecrated during holy Mass, and the *paten,* or plate, on which the Sacred Host rests. Although in the early days of Christianity chalices were made of glass, crystal, or some precious stone, if not of gold or silver, they were always anointed with holy oil before being used in the celebration of the sacred mysteries, and so consecrated forever for the one sacred purpose. Not only laymen but even clerics below the order of deacon were forbidden to touch them.

According to the discipline of the Church at the present day, the chalice itself (that is, the actual cup as distinguished from its stem and foot) must be made of gold or silver, and the inside of the cup must at least be gilt. Only poverty, however, sets a limit to the precious nature of the material and the richness of the decoration which all true Catholics would wish to see in this true "vessel of the Lord."

The chalice has a wonderful spiritual significance. It was referred to by our divine Lord Himself as the cup of His sorrows and sufferings—"My Father," He said, "if this chalice may not pass away, but I must drink it, Thy will be done." (Matt. xxvi. 42.) And to the apostles He said: "Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink?" (Ibid. xx. 22.) Hence, according to the Psalmist, we can not please Jesus better than to imitate His acceptance of suffering by at least doing our duty faithfully and bearing for His sake all the crosses, humiliations, and difficulties which its performance entails: "What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me? I will take the chalice of salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord," as the priest repeats before he par-

takes of the precious blood in the Communion of the Mass.

The same rules which govern the material of the chalice apply also to that of the paten, which must be at least of silver, gilt on its upper surface. The paten is placed on top of the chalice, where it rests until the Offertory, when the Host is offered upon it as a preparation for its subsequent consecration. It is then placed partly under the corporal, or given in charge to the subdeacon, until the time comes for the breaking of the Sacred Host and the priest's communion, when the precious body of Christ is reverently laid upon it.

Both the chalice and paten must be consecrated with holy oil by a bishop before being used for the celebration of Mass, after which no one is allowed to touch them except those in Holy Orders or those privileged to prepare them for the celebration of the Holy Mysteries.

In earlier times, all the bread to be consecrated for the communion of the people was placed on the paten, which was consequently much larger than it is at present. But now another vessel, called the *ciborium* (from the Latin *cibus,* food), is used instead. This is somewhat similar to the chalice, but wider and provided with a removable lid of the same

material. This is also used for reserving the Blessed Sacrament in the *tabernacle.* The latter was originally a vessel of gold or silver, generally in the form of a dove, and kept suspended from the canopy over the altar. But now the ciborium is kept in the miniature temple, or "tabernacle," which is so familiar to us, and the sight of which is so comforting and consoling to all who realize what it contains for us. The keys of this are, needless to say, kept with extraordinary care by the priest, and no one else is allowed access to them. Moreover, a lamp in which pure olive oil is kept constantly burning is kept always in front of it in order to indicate the Divine Presence to the faithful and to show honor to Our Lord Jesus Christ, who remains there day and night for our comfort and consolation.

A much smaller vessel, called a *pyx,* about the same size and shape as a watchcase and of the same material as the ciborium, and also provided with a cover, is used for carrying the Blessed Sacrament to the sick when the ciborium can not be carried publicly, as in Catholic countries, in solemn procession accompanied by acolytes, lights, and the ringing of a little bell to notify the faithful of the approach of our divine Lord.

In missionary countries the Blessed Sacrament is brought to the sick privately, in the pyx, which hangs by a chain around the priest's neck and rests upon his breast. Whilst thus engaged the priest is not supposed to speak to or salute any one, or even to sit down without necessity. We should, therefore, be careful not to obtrude our conversation or our attentions upon him, but silently and reverently salute our blessed Lord, humbly and suitably acknowledge the Divine Presence, and ask His blessing.

The sacred linens used in connection with the pyx are similar to those used at Mass, only necessarily much smaller—a corporal, in which the sacred vessel is wrapped, and the *purificator,* a small piece of linen used for cleansing the priest's fingers and the interior of the pyx after use. During Mass the purificator is kept folded over the mouth of the chalice when the latter is not in use, as from the beginning of Mass to the Offertory and from the Communion to the end. Upon it is placed the paten, and over this the *pall,* a square piece of stiff linen used to cover the mouth of the chalice so as to prevent insects or dust from falling into it during the holy sacrifice. The *veil,* a square piece of the same

material and color as the vestments, is placed over these, and on this again is placed the *burse,* or purse, a stiff pocket of similar material, used for containing the corporal.

Like the sacred vessels themselves, the corporal, pall, and purificator are not to be touched by laymen. After use they must be washed three times by a cleric with the order of at least subdeaconship, and the water used for the purpose must be placed in the *sacrarium,* or holy place specially reserved for such purposes.

Besides those sacred vessels and other objects which have such a close relation to the Blessed Sacrament, there are others used in connection with the administration of other sacraments and the discharge of other holy functions which our holy mother the Church regards with a reverence and respect and which she guards with a jealous care second only to that which she exercises in favor of those directly concerned with the Blessed Eucharist. These are the *holy oils,* which are used in administering the sacraments of Confirmation and Extreme Unction, in the ceremonies accompanying Baptism, and in the consecration of various sacred persons and objects.

In order to understand the wonderful

anxiety of the Church for the respectful reservation of the holy oils in the special vessels and with the particular care which she so rigorously prescribes, we need only consider the marvelous effects which those blessed means of grace are capable of producing in the souls of the faithful. Later on, when dealing with the various sacred functions in which they are employed, whether as the necessary matter of a sacrament, as the essential portion of important ceremonies, or as amongst the most dignified and fruitful of the sacramentals, we shall realize more fully how worthy are the vessels which contain them and what respectful care is due to them as true "vessels of the Lord."

The oil used in the sacred ceremonies is pure oil of olives, and is blessed in a most edifying and solemn manner by the bishop during Mass on Holy Thursday. An idea of the elaborate nature of the ceremonies on that occasion may be gained from the fact that the prelate is officially assisted in the sanctuary, in addition to the sacred ministers of the Mass, by seven subdeacons, seven deacons, and twelve priests.

Three separate vessels of oil are consecrated for three principal purposes. The first contains the *Oil of the Sick*, to be used in the administration of the sacrament of Extreme

Unction. The second contains the *Holy Chrism,* in which blessed balsam is also mixed, to be used for the sacrament of Confirmation and for various other sacred rites. The third contains the *Oil of Catechumens,* to be used chiefly for anointing candidates for Baptism, and also for consecrating the hands of a priest, the dedication of altars, bells, and other objects.

After the ceremonies the various priests secure a supply of each for the ensuing year. The main supplies are kept in three distinct vessels, each suitably marked, and are placed in a special receptacle called an *ambry,* a recess or little safe in the wall of the sanctuary near the main altar, which can be locked securely. From these vessels a small quantity of each sufficient for all ordinary needs is absorbed in cotton wool and placed in the *Holy Oilstocks,* a small cylindrical vessel in three sections, generally of silver, gilt inside. From this a sufficient quantity for immediate use can easily and neatly be pressed by the thumb of the right hand, with which all the anointings are performed. Needless to say, these precious vessels, as well as the general supply for the year, are carefully kept under lock and key by the priest himself.

Everything used in connection with the holy sacrifice of the Mass and the administration of the sacraments, such as the sacred vestments and vessels already referred to, is appropriately marked with a cross in order to keep before the minds of both priests and people the wonderful use for which they are consecrated or blessed, and the marvelous source of all the graces which through them are applied to the souls of the faithful—the Sacred Passion and Death of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

That the Church is not unreasonable in her extraordinary care for the sacred vessels, linens, and vestments, is seen from many remarkable instances related in Holy Scripture, wherein Almighty God Himself prescribed similar reverence to be manifested to the sacred vessels and vestments of the sanctuary in the Old Law, and punished those who either forgot themselves by interfering with them or wilfully profaned them. For example, when King David was bringing the Ark of the Covenant back in triumph to his own city, placed on a cart drawn by oxen, one of the drivers, named Oza, "put forth his hands to the ark of God, and took hold of it: because the oxen kicked and made it lean aside. And the indignation

of the Lord was enkindled against Oza, and He struck him for his rashness: and he died there before the ark of God." (2 Kings x. 1–7.)

It was indeed out of regard for the safety of the ark that Oza so far forgot himself, but it was forbidden to all but the priests to touch it, and so God showed His anger at the transgression. No wonder, then, that when the wicked Philistines unlawfully seized it and carried it sacrilegiously from city to city, "the hand of the Lord came upon every city with an exceeding great slaughter": And He smote the men of every city, both small and great, with dreadful plagues, so that "there was the fear of death in every city, and the hand of God was exceeding heavy" (1 Kings v). The Lord afterward slew fifty thousand of the Bethsamites because they had examined with irreverent curiosity the same holy object. (Ibid. vi.)

No less remarkable are the historical examples of similar divine chastisements of those who were guilty of profaning the vessels of the Lord in our Catholic churches. The dogs of the streets attacked and tore to pieces the Donatists who had dishonored the Blessed Eucharist. St. Gregory relates that an

English nobleman lost the use of his feet after having disrespectfully used a sacred vessel by washing his feet in it. Two soldiers of the army of Julian the Apostate who had profaned the altar and the sacred vessels died most horrible deaths, one from an ulcer which rotted him inwardly and caused him to vomit his entrails from his mouth. And a man named Proclus, who had made some garments for himself out of altar-cloths, died a raving lunatic, having bitten off his tongue in his agony.

Whilst no Catholic could be guilty of such revolting sacrileges, God's punishments on account of them should ever forcibly remind us of the great respect and reverence which is due to everything connected with the holy altar and sanctuary. Perhaps it is sometimes forgotten that the Church also anoints and consecrates the priests of her sanctuary in a special manner as sacred "vessels of election to carry His name." (Acts ix. 15.) And Almighty God is far more jealous of the respect due to those personal representatives of His Divine Son Jesus than He is even of that due to the material vessels of the altar. "Who shall put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and shall be guiltless?" (1 Kings

xxvi. 9) He says; and again: "Shall he not be put to death, because he cursed the Lord's anointed?" (2 Kings xix. 21.)

"Touch not My anointed: and do no evil to my prophets" (1 Paral. xvi. 22) is therefore the advice of Holy Scripture, for "He suffered no man to do them wrong: and reproved kings for their sake." (Ibid. 21.) Let us love and respect everything connected with the holy service of God, especially "the vessels of the Lord," and we shall ourselves become worthy temples of the Holy Ghost.

PART II

RIVERS OF JUDA

"Waters shall flow through all the rivers of Juda: and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the torrent of thorns." (Joel iii. 18.)

X

THE SAVIOUR'S FOUNTAINS

THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL.

"You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains." (Is. xii. 3.)

WHILST we have seen and partly examined the material portions, as it were, of the house of the Lord on the Holy Mount, there are still greater proofs of God's love and richer signs of His divine favor yet in store for us. For whilst the church and its adornments are primarily intended to honor Almighty God Himself, who dwells there, they are also by His special grace and favor to be shared and enjoyed by us in themselves and in their effects as His invited guests at the Holy Table of the Lord in the Master's House on Mount Sion. When Jesus, our great High Priest, offered Himself to His Eternal Father on Mount Calvary, and still continues to offer Himself daily in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, He intended not merely to pay the price of our redemption but also to provide us with those sacred chan-

nels through which the overflowing fountains of His grace and love might come to supply all the wants of our souls, which He foresaw and thus so kindly provided for in His holy sacraments, as had been foretold long before by His prophets—"You shall draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains," said Isaias (xii. 3); and "It shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down sweetness and the hills shall flow with milk: and waters shall flow through all the rivers of Juda: and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the torrent of thorns," said Joel (iii. 18).

We have already seen that the employment of sacred signs and ceremonies is useful, as the Council of Trent explains, to elevate the mind of man to a due consideration of divine things according to his twofold nature, and to assist him in giving expression accordingly also to his sentiments of love and respect for his Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. We have also seen that our divine Master Himself in the performance of His many miracles made use of exterior signs and ceremonies in order duly to impress the beholders and to render honor to His Heavenly Father. Nor did He fail to provide for the same weakness of human na-

ture when He had accomplished the great work of the redemption of the souls of men. "I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you," He said; "Yet a little while: and the world seeth Me no more. But you see Me: because I live, and you shall live." (John xiv. 18, 19.)

Yes. Though Our Lord Jesus Christ paid the price of our redemption and by His infinite merits provided for us a never-failing fountain for the supply of all our spiritual wants, He ordained that those merits should be applied to the souls of those disposed to profit by them by the fulfillment of certain simple and easily available conditions: "All you that thirst, come to the waters," He said in effect through the prophet Isaias, "and you that have no money, make haste, buy, and eat: come ye, buy wine and milk, and without any price." (lv. 1.)

So He established certain definite ceremonies to be used in conjunction with a certain definite form of words which should not only represent in a mystic manner the various graces of which they were to be the appropriate outward expression, but also be actually and infallibly, by the truth of His promise, the actual cause of the bestowal of those graces upon us, provided no obstacle be placed in the way

of their operation through the want of the proper dispositions, through some essential defect in the ceremonial prescribed, or in the intention of the minister attempting to perform it. Such are the holy sacraments, those channels of grace through which flow to our souls all the helps that we need from the rich and inexhaustible fountain of the merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

According to the Council of Trent, "If any one saith that the sacraments of the New Law were not all instituted by Jesus Christ, Our Lord; or that they are more or less than seven, to wit, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Order, and Matrimony; or even that any one of these seven is not truly and properly a sacrament, let him be anathema." Together these seven holy fountains of grace contain everything required for the life, preservation, improvement, and spiritual health and strength of the individual Christian, the family, the State, and the Church herself, in a manner analogous to the provision for the natural necessities of man, who must first be born into the world; must be provided with suitable food so as to grow and increase in strength from day to day; must be restored by proper medicine when he falls ill. Like-

wise the community of which he forms a part must be protected by just and equitable laws administered by an authoritative government which must conserve the rights and preserve the interests of the individual, the family, and the State itself. So by Baptism we are born again to a new life as "Christians and children of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven"; by Confirmation we are made strong to endure the burdens thus placed upon us and to discharge faithfully our duties as faithful soldiers of Christ; by the Holy Eucharist we are nourished with the Bread of eternal life; by Penance we are cured of our spiritual maladies, and the wounds of our souls are healed; by Extreme Unction we are assisted in a very special manner in our last great struggle; by Matrimony parents are helped to bring up children in the fear and love of God; and by Holy Orders we are provided with bishops and priests to break to us the Bread of Life and to rule and guide the Church of God.

These seven sacraments were mystically foreshadowed in many places in Holy Scripture. Thus, for instance, we find in the vision of the prophet Zachary a description of "a candlestick all of gold, and its lamp upon the top of it: and the seven lights thereof upon it:

and seven funnels for the lights that were upon the top thereof." (Zach. iv. 2.) The candlestick represents the Church of God and its strength and its victories are to be obtained by the grace of the seven sacraments and "not," as the angel explains, "with an army, nor by might, but by my spirit, said the Lord of hosts." (Ibid. v. 6.) Again, in the Book of Proverbs we read: "Wisdom hath built herself a house, she hath hewn her out seven pillars." (Prov. ix. 1.) Whilst there is described by St. John in the Apocalypse "a book written within and without, sealed with seven seals" (v. 1), which only the Lamb of God could open—"a Lamb standing as it were slain"—"and when he had opened the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new canticle, saying: Thou art worthy, O Lord, to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; because Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God, in Thy blood, out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom and priests. And we shall reign on the earth." (v. 8–10.)

"A sacrament," as the catechism says, "is an outward visible sign or action instituted by Christ to give grace." From which it follows that every true sacrament must fulfill three necessary conditions, namely, there must be some visible sign or action, this must be capable of giving grace, and Jesus Christ Himself must have been the author of it.

The outward visible sign or action consists of something done and of something said whilst doing so. The former is called the *matter* of the sacrament, and the latter is called the *form*. The thing or material used is called the *remote* matter, and the application or actual use of it is called the *proximate* matter. "The sacraments are perfected by the concurrence of three elements:—the thing, which is the matter; the words, which are the form; and the person of the minister, who confers the sacrament with the intention of doing what the Church does." (Pope Eugene.) Thus, for instance, in the sacrament of Baptism the remote matter is water, the proximate matter is the pouring on of the water, and the form is: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

It is easily seen that the first two conditions depend upon the third, for no one but Al-

mighty God Himself could attach to any sign or ceremony the effect of giving grace to the soul by virtue of the work done. It is an article of our holy Faith that Jesus Christ did institute no more and no less than seven such signs and that He promised to infuse His grace into the soul according to the particular object for which they were severally instituted, as soon as the ceremony as ordained by Him shall have been completed; that is, the proper matter and form being used by a minister with proper authority and the recipient being provided with the proper dispositions. The last mentioned, as we shall presently see, differ according to the nature of the sacrament and the effects, according to which different graces are conferred.

By grace is meant the supernatural gift of God's love and friendship, which is the spiritual life of the soul. This was lost by the sin of Adam, but was brought back again for us by the infinite merits of the Passion and Death of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. When we are baptized we are admitted to its enjoyment. By venial sin we lessen it. By mortal sin we lose it completely, and our souls become thereby dead to God. But as Baptism confers it, Penance restores it, whilst other sac-

raments increase it if already present. Such are the Holy Eucharist and Confirmation. Thus Baptism and Penance are called sacraments of the *dead;* the Holy Eucharist, Confirmation, and the rest sacraments of the *living.*

In addition to these general effects of the various sacraments there is also the special help, or actual grace given by each according to its nature. The very special grace which such sacraments as Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction confer for the very special purpose for which they were instituted is called *sacramental grace.*

Moreover, some of the sacraments confer as well a kind of spiritual and lasting dignity or, as it is said, impress a special *character* or mark upon the soul which can never be effaced. This special character is impressed according to the nature of each by Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders. These can accordingly never be repeated having been once conferred. This simply means that once a Christian always a Christian, once a soldier of Christ always a soldier of Christ, once a priest always a priest.

From all of which it is clear that some of the sacraments we are free to choose, as Matrimony and Holy Orders. Others are necessary

as means of salvation, such as Baptism for all, and Penance for those in mortal sin committed after Baptism. Others, again, are prescribed, such as Holy Eucharist and Confirmation.

An illustration of the nature and effects of the sacraments may be drawn from the ordinary practice of business men of making out checks in favor of those to whom they desire certain amounts to be paid out of the funds which lie to their credit at a bank. These instruments, as they are called, are in themselves but outward signs or symbols, but have a value and a significance from the fact that by mutual agreement between the bank and the customer they must be drawn up according to a certain definite plan. The amount to be paid must be plainly stated and the signature of the drawer must appear upon it exactly as it appears in the specimen in possession of the bank authorities. If any other name is written, if an unauthorized person writes it, or even if the client himself makes any alteration in his usual signature, the document is of no value. So it is with the sacraments. An unlimited treasure of grace and merit, purchased for us by the Passion and Death of Jesus Christ, stands to His credit, as it were, in the Bank of Heaven. By His own arrangement He allows certain

duly authorized persons, to draw up certain instruments in His name by which a share of these sacred merits is applied in favor of certain persons. If everything is in order according to the arrangements made by Him, the favored soul immediately obtains the advantage of the special instrument unless some obstacle be present to prevent or delay it, such as the want of the necessary dispositions. But if an unauthorized person attempts to perform the essentials, if the essentials are themselves wanting, or if the form be essentially mutilated or changed, then the outward sign or ceremony, however impressive it may appear to be in itself, is worth nothing as a sacrament and produces no fruit whatever.

It is clear, then, that the exact matter and form as instituted by Christ must be used; and moreover by a minister having the necessary authority, for, as we shall see, a bishop only can validly administer some, such as Holy Orders; a priest others, such as Penance; whilst any lay man or woman can administer Baptism at least validly.

How foolish it would be, then, to say that it is unreasonable for the salvation of any one to depend upon such a fact, for instance, as that such a substance is oil or water, as the case may

be; that such a person is a priest or a bishop or neither; that such or such a form of words is used. It would be just as foolish for one to complain at being refused payment for a check drawn up without the necessary formalities being observed, such as that there was merely a difference in the name attached or in the form of the signature!

In order to raise our minds to a loftier contemplation of their dignity and wonderful effects and as usual to assist our weak nature by means of the senses, our holy mother the Church, whilst strictly observing the exact arrangement of Jesus Christ, has surrounded the holy sacraments with impressive and instructive ceremonies which not only tend to preserve that arrangement but help to bring home to our minds their spiritual effects and express the great regard and wonderful respect which she entertains for those sacred and precious treasures by her extraordinary care and reverence in dispensing them as true and trusted "ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. iv. 1), so that all who approach may to the full "draw waters with joy out of the Saviour's fountains."

XI

BORN AGAIN

HOLY BAPTISM

"Unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John iii. 3.)

WHEN our divine Master came upon earth to restore to man by the sacrifice of Himself those spiritual rights and privileges which were lost through the fall of our first parents, He by no means intended that man was to be thereby deprived of free will, or confirmed forever in glory, without personal effort of acceptance and correspondence with regard to the graces and merits thus purchased for him. Jesus Himself definitely declared on more than one occasion that the mere accomplishment of the redemption of the human race by His sacred passion and death would not restore to every one those rights and privileges which belonged to us in Adam before the fall, but only to those who should believe in Him and fulfill certain necessary conditions. Sal-

vation was to be indeed for all men. "God our Saviour," says St. Paul, "will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.) But it was to be for each a personal matter. The price of redemption was paid in favor of all, but each had personally to draw upon the divine merits which were the result of it by freely accepting and carrying out the precise arrangements made by the Redeemer Himself.

What those arrangements and conditions are is clearly seen from Holy Scripture, the teaching of the apostles, and the constant practice of Holy Church. We are to begin a new life in Christ, having professed our faith in Him, accepted His teaching, and obeyed His directions. "As many as received Him," says St. John, "He gave them power to be made the sons of God, to them that believe in His name. Who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (i. 12, 13.)

There was to be a new spiritual birth by which we were to be made the sons of God, brothers of Jesus Christ, and His co-heirs to the kingdom of heaven. Each individual, as it were, had personally to ratify with Almighty God the new arrangement made for him in

view of the merits of Christ; he had to make a personal claim for a share in them. He had to be born again, not indeed according to the flesh, as our divine Lord explained to Nicodemus, but by a spiritual regeneration to which he is admitted on certain conditions by an exterior ceremony instituted by Christ Himself. Which ceremony is not only a sign of that cleansing from the inherited stain of original sin which such regeneration or new spiritual birth involves, but to it alone is attached by divine authority the intrinsic efficacy of immediately and of itself giving effect to it; for He said to Nicodemus: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he can not enter into the kingdom of God." (John iii. 5.) This wonderful and necessary passport to the kingdom of heaven is no less than the holy sacrament of Baptism, which is accordingly defined to be "a sacrament which cleanses us from original sin, makes us Christians and children of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven."

In order to understand properly the true nature, necessity, and effects of this sacred rite we must first understand what exactly is meant by "original sin," which is so called because we inherit it in the very origin or begin-

ning of our existence. Although the Council of Trent states that "the sin, in so far as it is renewed by generation in every human being born into the world, is real guilt, inherent in his nature," we must not thereby infer that each human being in the very origin of his existence is really guilty of *actual* sin. He is only in a *state* of sin, inherited guilt, or shame, which is very different from the personal guilt of sin.

Though Adam was made from the dust of the earth, he was made capable of knowing, loving, and serving his Creator, who infused into him an immortal soul, made according to His own image and likeness. According to the mere earthly nature of our first parents, they were gifted with intelligence and reason and would be destined to live forever in a state of natural happiness, having every natural want provided for. But Almighty God destined them for higher things and raised them by His pure generosity to a state above and beyond and altogether superior to that condition which was due to them by their nature alone, called, therefore, the supernatural state. By reason of their elevation to that dignity they were destined not only to be happy in this life but also forever in heaven, to which abode

of bliss they would be translated without pain, suffering, or death.

Almighty God having thus favored them without any claim or right on their part, but out of the abundance of His infinite goodness, also provided them with all the gifts necessary and suitable for such an exalted condition and for such a supernatural destiny. These chiefly consisted of His love and friendship, (or *original justice,* as it is called), knowledge, immortality, freedom from concupiscence (natural inclination to evil), and the perfect control of the lower animal appetites. He also endowed them with free will and expected them to prove their allegiance and obedience to Him by keeping only one command—not to eat of the fruit of a certain tree.

Had Adam remained faithful to God in this, all those wonderful gifts and graces would have been transmitted in full to his posterity. But, alas, he sinned and so lost everything. By his sin death came into the world and with it, as a result of sin, "darkness of the understanding, weakness of the will, and a strong inclination to evil." This is the inheritance to which we are born, and we should be in a truly miserable plight had not "the grace of God our

Saviour appeared to all men" (Titus ii. 11), "blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us" (Col. ii. 14), paying the price of our redemption with His own most precious blood—"who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works." (Titus ii. 14.) Hence, though the relics, or sensible effects of original sin still remain, we can by God's grace look forward once more to the possession of our inheritance in the kingdom of heaven.

When our divine Master was giving directions to His apostles, He definitely commanded them to receive converts to the holy Faith by submitting them to the rite of Baptism. "Going, therefore," He said, "teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. xxviii. 19). And this command we find the apostles to have obeyed to the very letter, baptizing all who desired to be received into the true Faith "by the laver of water in the word of life" (Eph. v. 26), which St. Peter compares to the ark of Noe, "whereunto Baptism being

of a like form, now saveth you also: not the putting away of filth of the flesh, but the examination of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Who is on the right hand of God, swallowing down death, that we might be made heirs of life everlasting." (1 Peter iii. 20–22.)

Baptism is, therefore, absolutely necessary as a means of salvation, and no one can enter heaven or receive any of the other sacraments without it. Its place may be supplied, however, in the case of adults, by what is called Baptism of *blood*, or martyrdom; and by Baptism of *desire*, or perfect contrition with the desire to be baptized. Only Baptism of *water*, however, is a true sacrament, and this alone imprints the mark or character upon the soul by which the recipient is constituted a true Christian and by virtue of which he may be admitted to the other privileges of "those who are of the household of the faith" (Gal. vi. 10), such as the valid and fruitful reception of the other sacraments.

Though the imprinting of this indelible mark or character by virtue of which the recipient becomes forever a child of God and a co-heir with Jesus Christ to the kingdom of heaven, is one of the chief effects of the sacra-

ment of Baptism, there are other effects as well; such, for instance, as the infusion of sanctifying grace, the remission of all sin, both original and actual, and all the punishment due to it in the next life. The full benefit of these effects may, however, be delayed through obstacles placed in their way by the want of proper dispositions.

As such eternal consequences depend upon the valid reception of this sacrament, it is most important that we should clearly understand and remember what is the necessary matter and form of it, so that in case of necessity we may be able to administer it, as is not only our privilege but our duty in certain circumstances; and that we should also know its effects and the obligations it imposes, so that we may more fully appreciate our wonderful privileges and be more disposed to carry out faithfully all our duties as Christians and children of God, as true heirs to the kingdom of our Father and brothers of Jesus Christ.

The necessary *remote matter* of Baptism is ordinary natural water, such as rain water, or that obtained from the sea, a lake, a river, a well, a spring, or the like. Thus did our divine Saviour provide for our wants by instituting as the matter of this holy sacrament what is

most common in nature and within easy reach of everybody everywhere, for His great desire is for "all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." (1 Tim. ii. 4.) "All you that thirst," He says by the mouth of His prophet, "come to the waters: and you that have no money make haste, buy . . . without money, and without any price." (Is. lv. 1.)

The necessary *proximate matter* is the application of the water to the person to be baptized. There are three ways in which this may be validly accomplished; namely, by immersion, by aspersion, and by infusion. But the last mentioned is the method at present adopted and prescribed by the Church. The water should be poured on the *head,* as being the most important and essential part of the body. But in some cases this is not possible, and then some other part must be selected. But as such is doubtful the Baptism should if possible be afterward repeated conditionally on the head. Care should also be taken that the water actually flows on the head itself and not merely on the hair or clothing.

The *form* to be used is *"I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* These words, and no others, should be distinctly pronounced whilst

the water is actually being poured on, and not before or after; and *by the same person who pours the water,* not by another.

Simple as this ceremony is, it beautifully represents the cleansing of the soul from all stain of sin, the resurrection from death to life, and the hope of immortality, which it actually effects through the grace and merits of Our Lord Jesus Christ, purchased for us by His precious blood. How grateful we should be, therefore, to our divine Lord and Master, how loyal we should be to our Heavenly Father as newly born children of the kingdom of His love! What firm resolution we should take to make ourselves worthy of such confidence! "What shall we say, then?" says St. Paul. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. For we that are dead to sin, how shall we live any longer therein? Know you not that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptized in His death? For we are buried together with Him by Baptism into death; that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection. Knowing this, that our old man is

crucified with Him, that the body of sin may be destroyed, to the end that we may serve sin no longer. For he that is dead is justified from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall live also together with Christ: . . . So do you also reckon, that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof." (Rom. vi.)

Whilst the use of ordinary water with the proper form of words constitutes a valid sacrament, no matter whether the person who performs the ceremony be a public sinner, a heretic, or an unbeliever, provided he has the intention of doing what the Church wishes to do in the matter; so august an instrument of salvation is too precious to be allowed in all circumstances to be deprived of those hallowed tokens of reverence and respect with which our holy mother the Church loves to surround the sacred treasures entrusted to her care—her solemn ceremonies. So she has formulated and appointed to be observed, except in cases of necessity, an impressive ritual which she commands to be carried out in all its details in what is called the public administration of the sacraments, especially in the case of Baptism.

This impressive ceremonial may appear to unbelievers to be an intricate and meaningless collection of words and signs, but to "those of the household of the Faith" (Gal. vi. 10) it has a clear and most beautiful spiritual significance, just as the stained-glass windows of her temples when observed from outside present to the view an irregular and seemingly meaningless patchwork of colors, but when viewed from within with the bright sunlight streaming through them they show forth some beautiful and artistic picture of a saint or of a scene in the life of our divine Master or His holy Mother which is not only commemorative of the person or event but an instructive aid to our piety and devotion. Thus, as the Wise Man says, "Good instruction shall give grace: in the way of scorners is a deep pit." (Prov. xiii. 15.)

In our next instruction, therefore, we shall review in detail those wonderful and impressive ceremonies which Holy Church makes use of in order to instruct the minds of her children in the knowledge of her sacred mysteries and to infuse into their hearts a becoming reverence in dealing with them. We shall see that their inward spiritual meaning is indeed a

beautiful and forcible reminder to us of how "the stream of the river maketh the city of God joyful," and how "the Most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle." (Ps. xlv. 5.)

XII

A FOUNTAIN OF LIFE

BAPTISM

"The law of the wise is a fountain of life, that he may decline from the ruin of death. Good instruction shall give grace." (Prov. xiii. 14, 15.)

PERHAPS in nothing, with the exception of what intimately concerns the holy sacrifice of the Mass, is the Church more careful or more elaborate in her ceremonial, or more instructive or more impressive in the spiritual significance which she attaches to it, than that with which she lovingly surrounds her reception of the new-born Christian into her maternal care. And this is what we should naturally expect from so wise and careful a mother in regard to the early spiritual nourishment of her dearest children, for whom she wishes the holy sacrament of Baptism to be not only the fountain of life and grace but also the first fruitful source of solid spiritual instruc-

tion. "The law of the wise," she says, "is a fountain of life, that he may decline from the ruin of death. Good instruction shall give grace." (Prov. xiii. 14, 15.)

In the beginning, the sacrament of Baptism was administered wherever it was found most convenient. Thus the apostle Philip, who converted the famous "man of Ethiopia" whilst driving with him in his chariot, stopped on the roadside when "they came to a certain water" and baptized him. (Acts viii.) But after the time of Constantine the sacred rite was administered only in the churches and baptisteries. These latter were separate buildings provided with a font and all other necessaries, and specially set apart for the one purpose. They were placed at or near the entrance to the church itself, in order to signify that it is by Baptism we enter into the Church and become members of the mystical body of Christ. Afterwards, as now, they consisted of spaces railed off immediately inside the church itself, and are at present referred to merely as the *baptismal font*.

The water used in the solemn administration of Baptism is specially consecrated for the purpose on the vigils of Easter and Pentecost Sundays, for originally it was only on these

two great feasts that the sacrament was solemnly conferred. The nature and consecration of the holy oils used in the ceremony will afterward be explained in detail. Here it is enough to say that they are consecrated by the bishop on Holy Thursday and consist of the *Oil of Catechumens* and the *Holy Chrism*. The catechumens were those who were desirous of becoming Christians, but who were still under instruction. They were allowed to take part in some of the spiritual exercises in the church even before their baptism, for the reception of which they were most anxious and ceased not to prepare themselves by prayer and meditation for its wonderful effects.

The person to be baptized should be brought to the church punctually at the time appointed, and in the case of infants this should be as soon as possible after birth. There should be at least one person of suitable age, that is, of the age of reason, to act as sponsor, though the custom is to provide both a godfather and a godmother, as they are appropriately called. It will be their duty to answer on behalf of the candidate, if an infant, and to be responsible, after the parents or guardians, for the spiritual care and training of the child. Hence they should be such as are fit for the due and proper

discharge of such a serious and solemn duty; not, therefore, bad Catholics, apostates, heretics, infidels, or members of condemned secret societies, even though they may be of such influence in the family that there is a natural desire to propitiate them by such a compliment. "Give not that which is holy to dogs," says Christ, "neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, they tear you." (Matt. vii. 6.) A newly baptized child is the most precious pearl in God's sight, and is sometimes influenced in life more by the peculiar sentimental influence of its godparents than by the teaching and example of its natural father and mother. For similar reasons the name of some saint or servant of God should be selected for the *Christian* name, so that the bright example of its holy patron might urge the child to lead a virtuous life. Parents sometimes seem to overlook this spiritual object and call their children after famous soldiers or statesmen, some great public event, some favorite plant or animal, or even as a compliment to some relation whose life and example is anything but a shining light for children of God to follow.

The sponsors contract a definite spiritual re-

lationship with the person baptized and with his parents which has the effect of rendering subsequent marriage either with the person baptized or with either of the surviving parents invalid, and therefore impossible. But the sponsors may validly and lawfully marry each other. Marriage between the person baptizing and the person baptized is also invalid.

The person to be baptized is met outside the church door, or immediately inside it, by the priest vested in surplice and violet stole. The violet stole is a sign of sin and sorrow, and betokens the necessity of penance. It is changed for a white one immediately after the actual baptism, as a sign of the joy and purity of the new spiritual birth which is the immediate effect of the holy sacrament. If the candidate be an infant the sponsors should be prepared to answer clearly on his behalf the various questions formally put to him by the priest. These questions are repeated in English after their pronouncement in Latin, for of course the whole ceremony is conducted in the official language of the Church.

This practice may seem to those outside her fold to be unreasonable on the part of the Church. But when we consider that all pos-

sible inconvenience is removed by the fact that the people have an exact translation of the ritual and that the nature and meaning of everything that is said and done is frequently explained to them, the wisdom and advantage of the practice stands out all the more prominently.

In the first place, the Church in this respect, as in many others, imitates the ancient custom of the Jews, who always have the selections from the Law and the Prophets and the ritual of their ceremonies read in the Hebrew language, whether the people understand it or not. Even our divine Master Himself at least tacitly approved of this custom by His acceptance of it in His attendances at the temple of Jerusalem. And by His own example also, for we are told by the evangelist that He prayed to His Eternal Father amidst the public circumstances of the Crucifixion in a tongue which was unknown to the people, in which also the Scriptures were written,—namely, the pure Hebrew. According to St. Matthew: "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani? that is, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me? And some that stood there and heard, said: This man calleth Elias" (Matt. xxvii. 46, 47), for they

mistook the words, on account of the similarity of sound.

But, apart from the fact that there is nothing objectionable in the practice, everything goes to show the appropriateness and convenience, and also, indeed, the necessity, of it. It was the language in which St. Peter first said Mass at Rome, and has ever since been the language in which the Holy Sacrifice has been offered throughout the whole Western Church, and in which the doctrines of the Church are defined and its ritual celebrated. Uniformity of public worship is thus preserved, and no change can occur either in words or in meaning, as would necessarily occur if any living language were used. Besides, in the Mass and in the administration of the sacraments the priest is not merely "conducting a service," as it is called, but performing a public official act and dealing directly with Almighty God. It is not necessary, therefore, that the people should even hear his voice, provided they unite their hearts and minds with what he is *doing* on their behalf, like Zachary in the temple, when, "according to the custom of the priestly office, it was his lot to offer incense, going into the temple of the Lord. And all the multitude of

the people was praying without." (Luke i. 9, 10.)

The priest begins the ceremony by asking: "What dost thou ask of the Church of God?" To which the sponsor answers: "Faith." Then he asks: "What doth faith bring thee to?" The answer is "Life everlasting." Having received this assurance of the necessary faith as indicated by our divine Master in the words, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved" (Mark xvi. 16), the priest continues: "If, therefore, thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." After which he proceeds to prepare the candidate for the wonderful favors he is about to receive, by blessing and sanctifying his body and calling on the devil in the name and by the authority of God to depart from him. He lightly breathes three times on the face of the child and says: "Depart from him, unclean spirit, and give place to the Holy Ghost the Comforter," in order to signify "that he may expel the power of the old serpent, and may catch the breath of life," as the Council of Trent explains.

Then he makes with his thumb the sign of the cross upon the forehead and upon the breast of the child, saying: "Receive the sign of the cross on thy forehead and on thy heart; receive the faith of the heavenly precepts, and be such in your manner of life, that you may be the temple of God."

The signing of the various parts of the body signifies, according to the Council of Trent, "that, by the ministry of Baptism, the senses of the person baptized are opened and strengthened to enable him to receive God, and to understand and to observe His precepts." A prayer to this effect follows.

Next he places his hand on the head of the child and prays that God may protect him and give him grace to keep His commandments by removing from him all blindness of heart and all snares of the devil, so that he may joyfully serve Him in wisdom and in the sweet odor of sanctity and become every day more and more holy.

As a sign and as a reminder of heavenly wisdom, salt is then placed in his mouth, after being specially blessed for the purpose, the priest saying: "Receive the salt of wisdom; may it help thee unto eternal life." Then he prays "that by the doctrine of faith and the

gift of grace he should be freed from the corruption of sin, experience a relish for good works, and be delighted with the food of divine wisdom," as the holy Council explains.

Salt is a symbol of preservation from corruption, and is also a sign of that wisdom by which we are preserved from the corruption of sin, for the sinner is called in Holy Scripture "a fool" and the just man "wise." Such a symbolism was used by our divine Master when He said to the apostles: "You are the salt of the earth." (Matt. v. 13.)

Having prayed further for the gift of freedom from all power of the devil, having claimed him for God and signed him again with the sign of the cross, commanding the unclean spirit to depart "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," the priest lays his hand upon the head of the child and asks God to grant him light, knowledge, grace, wisdom, hope, and holy charity. Then, placing on his head the extremity of his stole, the sign of his priestly authority, he leads him to the baptismal font, saying: "Enter into the Church of God, that thou mayst have part with Christ unto life everlasting." Then the Creed and the Lord's Prayer are recited by the priest and sponsors together, and the exorcism

of the devil is again pronounced over the child that he may become a worthy dwelling for the Holy Spirit.

Then, after the example of our divine Lord when He cured the deaf and dumb man by anointing his ears and mouth with spittle, the priest moistens his thumb in his mouth and lightly touches the ears and nostrils of the infant, saying: "Be thou opened unto the odor of sweetness." The sponsors then answer the three questions of the priest to the candidate, formally asking if he renounces Satan and all his works and pomps, by the words "I do renounce him"' to the first, and "I do renounce them" to the others.

After this the child is anointed with the holy Oil of Catechumens on the breast and between the shoulders. "On the breast," explains the Council of Trent, "that, by the gift of the Holy Ghost, he may cast off error and ignorance, and may receive the true faith, 'for the just man liveth by faith' (Gal. iii. 11); on the shoulders, that, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, he may shake off negligence and torpor, and engage in the performance of good works; for 'faith without good works is dead.'" (James ii. 26.) The priest then removes the violet stole, the sign of sin and penance, and

puts on a white one, the sign of innocence and joy, for now the sacred rite itself is about to be administered.

Once more the candidate is again interrogated, this time in some detail, with regard to the chief articles of faith as found in the Apostles' Creed, to which the sponsors answer: "I do believe." Then the priest asks: "Wilt thou be baptized?" and, having received the answer: "I will," he immediately pours the water on the head of the child in the form of a cross three separate times, saying: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Both sponsors should actually touch the child during this ablution, holding it so that the water may not fall on the floor or back into the font but into the vessel placed to receive it.

The priest then anoints the crown of the head with the Holy Chrism, in the form of a cross, with a suitable prayer. Immediately afterwards, he places a white cloth over the head of the child, saying: "Receive this white garment, which mayest thou carry without stain before the judgment seat of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have life everlasting." "This symbol signifies the glory of the resurrection, to which we are born again

by Baptism; the brightness and beauty with which the soul, purified from the stains of sin, is invested in Baptism; and the innocence and integrity which the person baptized should preserve through life."

Finally, the newly baptized person is dismissed, a lighted candle having been placed in his hand, with the words: "Receive this burning light, and keep thy baptism so as to be without blame; observe the commandments of God, that when Our Lord shall come to His nuptials, thou mayest meet Him together with all the saints in the heavenly court, and mayest thou have eternal life, and live for ever and ever. Amen. Go in peace, and the Lord be with thee. Amen."

XIII

A SECOND PLANK

PENANCE

"Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish." (Luke xiii. 3.)

THE word "penance" has such a variety of meanings that in view of the important duties which depend upon it in some of its significations and the eternal consequences which may result from the proper discharge of these duties, it will be necessary to understand very clearly what is exactly meant when the term is used in any connection, but particularly when it is used in connection with the holy sacrament of that name.

The word originally signified some pain, fine, or penalty imposed upon any one as a punishment or satisfaction for injury inflicted. From which it came to mean the pain or suffering which is the natural result of wrongdoing, automatically, as it were, following from evil conduct. A dishonest servant, for

instance, is discovered by his master. The result is the loss of his position and character and consequent inconvenience or suffering. The prodigal son, in the parable of our divine Master, who "went abroad into a far country; and there wasted his substance, living riotously. And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want" (Luke xv.), found himself in dire distress and suffering as the natural result of his evil course of conduct. Such people are, therefore, forced to the conclusion that they have acted foolishly and feel a natural sorrow for their evil actions. Like the prodigal son, "returning to themselves," they become *penitent,* and accept the consequences as due to their deeds and as a strong incentive to change their ways. Such penance, however, is only a natural virtue, as it takes no account of Almighty God or the eternal spiritual consequences.

But when a sinner considers that he has by offending his Creator lost heaven or deserved hell, and feels sorry in consequence, he takes a higher plane and rises to a *supernatural* sorrow. He thereby exercises interior acts of the supernatural virtue of penance. When he accepts the temporal results of his sins as

punishments from the hand of God and willingly bears them as some satisfaction to the divine majesty for the insult offered, or even imposes upon himself some extra penalty with the same spiritual object in view, he is said to practise exterior acts of the same holy virtue.

From which it follows that by *"penance"* we now mean either the virtue of penance, which is true sorrow for having offended God; or acts of penance, which are a kind of satisfaction to God for sin committed; or the holy sacrament of Penance, of which both the virtue and the acts are but a part.

The virtue of penance has always been absolutely necessary in order to obtain pardon of our sins from Almighty God. Hence those words of our divine Master: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 3), although referring to the general necessity of sincere sorrow for sin, have a particular and very important signification as applied to the necessary matter of the holy sacrament of Penance; for even though Jesus Christ gave to His Church the power of forgiving sin, He did not give any one the power of forgiving the sins of those who are not sincerely sorry for them. Even Almighty God Himself could not on account of His infinite

justice pronounce pardon upon an unrepentant sinner. Such an idea contains a contradiction in terms.

There are various kinds of contrition, or sorrow for sin, according to the nature of our reason or motive for such sorrow. Only one kind of sorrow, however, is of any avail with Almighty God, and that is supernatural sorrow. One may regret having committed a mortal sin because he has been found out and has thereby lost his reputation, money, friends, or position. But all these reasons are merely natural and have no reference to Almighty God, who is offended. They are, therefore, of no avail to obtain forgiveness from Him. It is quite clear, accordingly, that we must have a higher, a supernatural motive for our regret. That is, we must have some reason for our contrition, which takes account of the injury or insult offered to God, or at least of the spiritual results of it, such as the divine punishments we have deserved on account of it. The more closely such reasons or motives consider Almighty God's own interests, as it were, and the less of selfish consideration there is in them, the more perfect our contrition becomes. When we unselfishly consider God alone, when we are sorry for having offended Him who is

so good in Himself, apart from His goodness to us, our contrition is said to be *perfect,* as it arises from the pure love of God Himself. This pure love, or perfect charity, or perfect contrition, as it is variously designated, is sufficient of itself to unite the soul immediately with God and blot out all sin. "He that loveth Me," says Christ, "shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him." (John xiv. 21.) "Charity covereth a multitude of sins," says St. Peter. (iv. 8.) And our divine Master said of Mary Magdalen: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much." (Luke vii. 47.)

Whilst having a supernatural motive for our sorrow, it is possible that our reason for being sorry takes more account, as it were, of ourselves—as for instance in our fear of hell—than of the offense against God, so good in Himself. It is, however, a good motive, though a selfish and imperfect one compared to that of true charity, or the pure love of God for His own sake. Such imperfect contrition, or *attrition,* as it is called, would never of itself be sufficient to blot out a single mortal sin.

But our dear Lord and Master, knowing our weakness, foresaw that even after our new spiritual birth we might fall again under the

power of the devil and by willful mortal sin render ourselves worthy of eternal damnation, provided us with yet another means of salvation and offers us what has been aptly called by the holy Fathers of the Church "a second plank," by laying hold of which we may save ourselves from the shipwreck of sin, even though we have not arrived at that state of perfect love of God which wipes out all sin.

By the institution of the sacrament of Penance Our Lord Jesus Christ raised that inferior degree of sorrow, attrition, or imperfect contrition, to the dignity of a sacrament and attached to it by the generous exercise of His divine omnipotence the efficacy of blotting out sin under certain easily fulfilled conditions. At the same time, He made it obligatory on all who are guilty of mortal sin to have recourse to such an easy means of reconciliation, so that even perfect contrition must now include the true desire to fulfill such conditions if at all possible.

The sacrament of Penance is unlike other sacraments in this, that the recipient himself, for the cause is his own, must see that the proper necessary matter is provided, consisting, as we shall see, of personal sorrow for personal sin united with the sincere desire of

atonement and the firm purpose of amendment, as well as other conditions. It is most important, therefore, for us to realize and remember what the necessary conditions are for the fruitful reception of this sacrament, since so much depends upon ourselves.

We read in the Gospel of St. Matthew that on one occasion "they brought to Him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed. And Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy: Be of good heart, son. Thy sins are forgiven thee. And behold some of the scribes said within themselves. He blasphemeth. And Jesus, seeing their thoughts, said: "Why do you think evil in your hearts? Whether is it easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee: or to say, Arise, and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then said He to the man sick of the palsy): Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house. And he arose, and went into his house. And the multitude seeing it, feared, and glorified God that gave such power to men." (ix. 2–8.)

Here we see Christ proving by a miracle that even as man He had power on earth to forgive sins. And the people who witnessed the proof were convinced of the truth of His assertion,

for "the multitude seeing it, feared and glorified God that gave such power to men." Christ, therefore, even as man, had power to forgive sin. This same power He transmitted to His apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests of His Church, on the very day of His resurrection, saying to them: "Peace be to you. As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them; and He said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." (John xx. 21–23.) He had already said to them: "Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matt. xviii. 18.)

Had Christ merely said: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them," His priests might indeed exercise their wonderful power by pronouncing sentence of absolution indiscriminately on the multitude, without any special examination of their worthiness to receive it, beyond, perhaps, their general acknowledgment of sin such as we give expression to in the Confiteor. But Jesus also

said: "Whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." And this makes all the difference. We see from it that He did not intend the power of forgiveness to be used indiscriminately, but only in strictly judicial manner and circumstances, after the cause is heard and the evidence weighed, the priest being the judge as to whose sins are to be forgiven and whose retained.

This clearly involves, therefore, the confession of sin on the part of the penitent, together with all such circumstances as are calculated to affect the merits of the case, such as the sincerity of his contrition, his purpose of amendment, his willingness to repair injuries, to restore ill-gotten goods or his neighbor's character, the avoidance of the occasions of sin, and the adoption of the necessary means toward all these ends.

And, as the sacrament of Penance is therefore constituted a true *tribunal,* the priest himself must possess (in addition to the power of Orders, which he received at his ordination and by virtue of which he has the intrinsic power of forgiving all sin, even the greatest) the power of jurisdiction also by virtue of which he is empowered to exercise validly his divine function of absolution only in the district or

circumstances assigned to him by his ecclesiastical superiors, just as a judge can exercise his judicial functions with legal effect only in the particular district or circuit assigned to him by the State authorities. These two powers constitute the priest's necessary faculties, and are commonly known as "the power of the keys." From such jurisdiction the Pope or the bishop may even except certain serious sins, judgment on which they may reserve to themselves, and hence called "reserved sins." But, in the case of the dying, provision is made for all cases and all circumstances; our holy mother the Church by special enactment supplying all necessary faculties even though the only available priest has ordinarily no jurisdiction or approbation whatever.

Thus only can God's sacred minister exercise with the necessary justice, prudence, and spiritual fruit the wonderful power entrusted to him in the administration of this sacrament. Hence we may, as it were, analyze and classify the necessary matter and form under certain definite headings, as in every true sacrament.

The necessary *remote matter* consists of all mortal sins committed after baptism and not yet directly remitted by the power of the keys. This simply means that we must, as it were,

declare each and every one of such sins to the priest in order that he may properly judge our cause. To do this with a view of obtaining pardon for them we must also be provided with the necessary dispositions. That is, we must give some proof of our sincere sorrow and firm purpose of amendment. In other words, the necessary *proximate matter* of the sacrament of Penance consists of the acts of the penitent, which are *contrition, confession,* and *satisfaction.* Though the last mentioned is usually completed only when the special acts prescribed by the confessor as sacramental penance is completed, there must at least be present the intention of performing it. Moreover, its actual performance is an integral part of the sacrament and is necessary for its perfection. The *form* consists in the words of absolution pronounced by the priest: "I absolve thee from thy sins." To this are added by command of the Church certain other formulæ and prayers, some before and some after the actual words of absolution.

It is quite clear that the most important of the acts of the penitent is *contrition,* because though in some cases sin may, by the mercy of God, be remitted without confession or satisfaction—as, for instance, when death is immi-

nent and a full confession is as impossible as the due performance of any adequate sacramental penance—even Almighty God Himself can not forgive sin without true contrition. As we have seen, this contrition must have a supernatural reason or motive, such as the love of God, the fear of hell or the loss of heaven. It must be *internal,* that is, from the heart, and not a mere outward expression of sorrow without any real earnest intention to avoid sin for the future. It must be *supreme,* or above everything, so that we should be prepared to lose all and suffer all rather than wilfully offend God again. Finally, it must be *universal,* that is, it must include at least implicitly all mortal sin and its occasions. This naturally means that the penitent must have a firm purpose of amendment and a sincere desire to satisfy God's justice.

So important are all these matters that it will be necessary for us to examine them in greater detail in our next discourse, in order that we may be properly prepared to derive all the benefits within our reach from so great and so necessary a source of grace and mercy, of salvation and sanctification so kindly and so generously provided for all poor sinners by the infinite love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who

says to us: "Come to Me, all you that labor, and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi. 28.)

XIV

GLORY AND SHAME

PENANCE

"There is a shame that bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace."
(Ecclus. iv. 25.)

THE holy sacrament of Penance is so important and far-reaching in its nature, necessity, and effects that all Christians are obliged to make frequent and continual use of it. This very frequency of its use makes it all the more necessary for us to understand fully and thoroughly realize in all its details the kind of preparation which is essential for its worthy and fruitful reception.

We have seen that it is a true sacrament instituted by Christ Himself, and consisting of the outward visible sign of the manifestation of our sins and of our sorrow for them to the priest together with the words of absolution pronounced by him in the name and by the authority of Jesus Christ.

We have also seen that we must have true interior sorrow, founded on some supernatural reason, for having offended Almighty God, together with a firm purpose of amendment and a desire to satisfy God's justice by suitable reparation or satisfaction.

We must, therefore, place before the priest a true statement of the state of our conscience, at least with regard to the mortal sins with which it is actually burdened. If we have no such sin to confess we must, in order to obtain the grace of the sacrament, either confess some sin of our past life already remitted, or some venial sin or sins for which we are truly sorry. For, although Penance was primarily instituted for the purpose of removing the guilt of mortal sin, yet "if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity" (1 John i. 9), even the slightest. But "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." (Ibid. 8.) Such sins are, therefore, said to be *free matter* for the sacrament, for as other means have been provided by the goodness of Almighty God for their cleansing, such as acts of faith, contrition, the love of God, the devout reception of the other sacraments; and, as they do not kill the soul, like

mortal sin, by depriving it altogether of its true life (which is sanctifying grace), they do not constitute *necessary matter,* that is, it is not necessary that they should be directly submitted to the power of the keys.

It is evident, that before approaching the sacred tribunal a certain preparation is necessary in order to secure all the essentials for at least the valid reception of this holy sacrament, just as in the case of Baptism we must be provided with the water, present a suitable subject in the person to be baptized, and have a proper minister.

In the first place, therefore, we must have a clear and proper conception of the state of our conscience, at least with regard to all mortal sins, as far as human frailty assisted by the grace of God will permit. We should accordingly pray earnestly for grace to see our sins in their true light and to realize something of their enormity in the sight of Almighty God. We should, then, carefully examine our conscience, endeavoring to discover all the sins of which we have been guilty and the cause of our weakness or neglect. To assist us in this important matter we may examine ourselves in the light of the commandments of God and of His Church, the seven deadly sins,

or principal personal weakness (or predominant passion, as it is called), the duties of our particular state of life, the discharge of some particular obligations or the like, or we may use the table of sins provided in our prayer-book for the purpose. In this matter we must be very honest and very open with ourselves, for "he that hideth his sins shall not prosper: but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy." (Prov. xxviii. 13.) Some throw dust in their own eyes and hide their sins not only from the priest but even from themselves. They try to shut their eyes altogether to some that worry them in spite of their desire to keep them in the background. They know in their hearts that perhaps if they are to face them bravely and openly it will mean some sacrifice or loss or deprivation which they are unwilling to suffer. But our divine Master warns such: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell." (Matt. v. 29.)

We must, then, deal very honestly with ourselves, for "the deceitful man the Lord will abhor." (Ps. v. 6.) We should, then, consider what answer we should give regarding

those matters not only in the sacrament of Penance but "in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." (Rom. ii. 16.) We should pray earnestly for the necessary light and courage to see and face the difficulty. "Cry to Me and I will hear thee: and I will show thee great things and sure things which thou knowest not. For thus saith the Lord the God of Israel. . . . Behold I will close their wounds and give them health, and I will cure them: and I will reveal to them the prayer of peace and truth." (Jer. xxxiii. 3–6.)

No doubt there is in the confession of our sins to the priest something difficult and shameful to human nature, but in view of its object and effects something very comforting and consoling, bringing true peace to the heart and real freedom to the soul. When we commit sin the devil takes away from us the shame we should feel at offending Almighty God; but when we come to confession he wickedly restores it to us in the hope of our confusion. We should, then, bravely overcome such temptation, and by humbly submitting to the ordeal put the devil himself in shame to flight. "For thy soul be not ashamed to say the truth," says Holy Scripture, "for there is a shame that

bringeth sin, and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace." (Ecclus. iv. 24, 25.) Besides, we must remember that we are to confess not to angels but to men, sinners like ourselves who must submit to similar inconvenience and who therefore "can have compassion on them that are ignorant and that err: because they themselves also are compassed with infirmity" (Heb. v. 2). Also that as soon as our confession is over our sins are not merely forgiven but forgotten, buried forever in the heart of the priest under the obligation known as the *seal* of confession, in virtue of which the confessor dare not, even to save his life, breathe the slightest suspicion of the knowledge he has thus acquired, even to the penitent himself. Though all the circumstances of all our evil dispositions were remembered by him in detail he could not by any act, word, or mode of conduct toward us betray even the slightest recollection of them. Not even in his own mind dare he think the less of us, or insinuate that knowledge even to ourselves in the smallest particular. This obligation, therefore, admits of no exception, and is most serious even with regard to small matters, that is, there is no such thing as a venial sin in connection with it on account of the insignifi-

cant nature of the revelation, for the revelation of even the slightest little matter would be most serious.

But though the confessor, in virtue of his office, is primarily bound by this most solemn obligation, others may also be accidentally bound by it through extraordinary circumstances, the nature and extent of the obligation being then exactly the same both in kind and in degree as for the confessor himself. Thus, for instance, it may happen that a penitent may choose to confess through an interpreter, though not bound to do so. The latter then falls under the obligation of the *seal* in exactly the same way as the priest. Or suppose, as sometimes happens, the confession or any part of it is overheard by a third party; he is bound to secrecy in the very same way, and he would be guilty of a most serious crime were he to disclose his knowledge in any way to the priest or to the party concerned or to any one else.

But the good Catholic instinctively realizes all this, and knows from experience what a sweet source of comfort and consolation is provided for him in the sacred tribunal, where he receives from Jesus Himself in the person of His sacred minister not only the sentence of pardon but also expert advice for the treat-

ment and cure of all his spiritual maladies, healing medicine for all the wounds of his soul, and complete relief from the deadly disease of sin in which his soul lies languishing. It only remains for us, therefore, to take good care that our approach to this holy sacrament has all the necessary qualifications, so that we may not abuse God's mercy and thereby bring upon ourselves a curse instead of a blessing and a cure.

The first requisite for a good confession is that it be *humble*. If there is any occasion on which pride should find no place in our hearts surely it is when we kneel at the feet of God's sacred minister to seek relief from our misery by acknowledging our weakness and sin. "A humble and contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise," says the Psalmist (Ps. li. 19), whilst "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble," says St. James. (iv. 6.) If we consider the greatness, the goodness, the majesty, and the love of God, against whom we rise in rebellion by willful sin and try to realize what punishment we deserve for doing so, our souls must be filled with true humility as we seek to be restored again to the grace and favor we have lost.

As the sacrament of Penance was instituted

for the special purpose of laying our sins at the feet of the priest in order to obtain forgiveness, there should be nothing introduced which is not necessary toward that chief object, least of all matters of business or of social intercourse. Even matters of conscience which do not concern our immediate confession are wisely postponed till the latter is completed. Our confession should, therefore, be *simple.* We must state clearly the number and the kind of our sins, together with such circumstances as may render them more or less grievous, or even change their actual nature—thus, for instance, whether we wronged our neighbor in a matter of a few pence or of as many pounds; whether we merely made an unkind remark about him or seriously injured his character; whether what we said about him was true or false. This is also necessary for the purpose of knowing what reparation is to be made, for if we still possess what belongs to another we must restore it; if we have injured our neighbor's character we must repair it.

From this it follows that our confession must be *complete;* that is, we must not willfully conceal any mortal sin or seriously aggravating circumstance. We may deceive the priest,

but we can not deceive Almighty God. We may deceive even ourselves, but our sins will rise up against us and bring upon us God's anger on account of our additional crime of sacrilege. "Thus saith the Lord: Deceive not your souls, saying: The Chaldeans shall surely depart and go away from us: for they shall not go away. But if you should even beat all the army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there should be left of them some wounded men: they shall rise up, every man from his tent, and burn this city with fire." (Jer. xxxvii. 8, 9.) We must, then, make a sincere confession, declaring everything as it appears to our conscience. We must not make excuses, blame others, mention the sins of others, or in any way lead the priest to think us less or even more guilty than we really are.

Although the guilt of sin and its eternal punishment may be remitted, there still remains a certain amount of temporal punishment due to the offended majesty of God. When King David acknowledged and repented of his crimes, God forgave him but imposed such a penalty upon him. "And David said to Nathan: I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said to David: The

Lord also hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord, for this thing the child that is born to thee shall surely die." (2 Kings xii. 13, 14.) Hence the penance imposed by the confessor is a grave obligation if the matter be serious, and it would be a mortal sin willfully to omit it or to postpone it so long that we should run the risk of forgetting it. We should, therefore, perform it as soon as possible and thus show our gratitude for our forgiveness as well as our willingness to atone for the past.

Whilst venial sins may be remitted by this sacrament as well as by other means, and whilst much spiritual good may be derived from the practice of confessing them, we must guard against the danger of constantly confessing the same sins without any sign of improvement or amendment, and therefore without true contrition or desire to amend. For safety it is wise to confess some sin of our past life, whether mortal or venial, for which we are truly sorry. We must also be sure that such sin was willful and deliberate and known by us to be a sin when we committed it.

After confession we should not discuss with others what the priest said to us or we to him.

or even tell our penance. Those who have such a propensity seldom or never give a true account of the proceedings, and generally misrepresent things in their own favor. Neither should parents exact such accounts from their children even with regard to exterior faults.

Our great means for making a good confession is, then, a strong desire to profit by this wonderful means of grace and reconciliation, coupled with earnest prayer for the necessary light and grace. Then Almighty God will assist us and by His love and mercy will dispose our souls to receive with profit the sentence of pardon. How glad we should feel, then, when from the lips of His anointed minister we hear those words of peace, reconciliation, and holy blessing which are to cleanse us from all stain and restore us to the friendship of Jesus Christ: "May Almighty God have mercy on thee, forgive thee thy sins, and bring thee to life everlasting. Amen. May the almighty and merciful God grant thee pardon, absolution, and full remission of thy sins. Amen. May our Lord Jesus Christ absolve thee, and I by His authority absolve thee from every bond of excommunication and of interdict, as far as I have power and as far as thou needest. I absolve thee from thy sins in the

name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen. May the passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the merits of the Blessed Virgin and of all the saints, together with whatever good thou hast done and evil thou hast suffered be an increase of grace and the reward of eternal life unto the remission of sins. Amen."

XV

THE LAST FARTHING

INDULGENCES AND PURGATORY

"Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing." (Matt. v. 26.)

WHILST prayers and other good works are imposed upon the penitent with a view toward satisfying the temporal punishment which, as we have seen, sometimes remains after the guilt of sin and its eternal punishment have been remitted, it by no means follows that such satisfaction is considered adequate by the Church. Indeed, she expressly teaches the very opposite when she declares that "the whole life of a Christian ought to be a continual penance." (Council of Trent.) The amount of penance necessary to wipe out all the temporal punishment which remains due to us on account of our sins and imperfections is known to Almighty God alone and depends upon many circumstances of which we can have no knowledge.

But whilst the infinite justice of Almighty God is so exacting that no sinner, even though he has truly and sincerely repented of all his sins and imperfections, can enter the kingdom of heaven "till he repay the last farthing," the divine generosity is none the less gracious and abounding, for Christ left to His Church the power of loosing and binding such spiritual bonds when He said to St. Peter: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in heaven." (Matt. xvi. 19.) This power she graciously and judiciously exercises by binding us to works of mortification and penance, or by releasing from portion or even from all of our debt by means of *indulgences.*

In the early days of Christianity, when the faith of her children was strong and their zeal ardent, she imposed upon them those severe and prolonged penances which are to us now a source of wonder. For public crimes public penances were imposed. Here, as well as in the holy sacrament itself, she had a regular code of punishments, each duly proportioned to the gravity of the offense. For the graver crimes penances lasting for years and some-

times even for life were imposed. For less serious sins punishments for forty, fifty, or a hundred days were administered. These consisted of fasting, alms-giving, the recitation of certain prayers, and various other good works. They were called canonical penances because they were ordered and arranged by the canon law of the church. Sometimes, as for instance on great feast-days, or in times of persecution at the prayer of those holy martyrs who were about to suffer for the Faith, a relaxation of these penances was granted to those who had shown themselves truly contrite on condition of performing some easily performed specified works of piety, reciting certain prayers or the like. And the Church in doing this removed not only the exterior penance imposed by herself but also the spiritual debt of punishment due to sin which such a penance would atone for in the sight of God. In other words she granted indulgences.

But this debt of punishment being canceled where then is the satisfaction for sin which the justice of Almighty God always demands? To understand this we must know what is meant by the "treasury of the Church." This is as it were the spiritual bank in which the superfluous merits of Christ and His saints are

stored up and entrusted to the care of the Church. For, as we know, the sufferings and death of our blessed Saviour are capable in themselves of satisfying for the sins of millions of worlds. They are of infinite value in God's sight. And many of the saints and martyrs of all ages performed more penances than were sufficient to atone for all their sins and imperfections. Were all these superfluous merits to be lost? No; Christ gave them into the care of His Church to guard them and keep them and distribute them as need should arise to her faithful children, who share in all the merits of Christ and the saints because they are all members of one body of which Jesus is the head and He "nourisheth and cherisheth it." (Eph. v. 29.)

Yes; the Church has received from God not only the power of forgiving sins but also of remitting the temporal punishment remaining due to them after the guilt has been removed. Christ no doubt has suffered for us all. His merits are available but they must be applied to our souls. And so Christ said to St. Peter: "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." And the Church, as a faithful guardian of the treasure committed to her care, dispenses these favors to her children only in

certain measure and circumstances, when they are worthily disposed and comply with certain conditions. In the early days of her existence she was not so lavish of her favors as she is at present, for the faith and fervor of her children were then strong; and their constitutions too were better able to withstand the effects of long and severe penances. So, like a provident mother, she now opens up the treasures confided to her care and exercises more fully the privilege of loosing which she received from her divine Master. Sometimes she grants a full remission of all the punishment remaining due, sometimes she remits only a portion. Hence we have what are called *plenary* and *partial* indulgences. Her usual method of doing this is to attach the indulgence to the performance of some good work under certain conditions.

In order to gain an indulgence at all it is of course first necessary that the guilt of all mortal sin be already remitted, that the penitent be already in the state of grace. To gain a plenary indulgence, or full remission, it is necessary in addition that he have no attachment to sin and be free from all guilt. Hence, though one may not gain all the effect of a plenary indulgence he may gain part of it

according to the perfection of his dispositions at the time, and so it is not unreasonable to attempt to gain all the plenary indulgences within our power.

The form usually employed by the Church in granting a partial indulgence is to mention the number of days or years, as the case may be, for which remission is granted. Thus we have indulgences of forty days, a hundred days, seven years and seven quarantines (periods of *forty days,* or of the duration of a season of Lent) and so on. Now what does this mean? It does not mean, as some imagine, that the time one would have to spend in purgatory is shortened by those periods, but that so much of the punishment is remitted before Almighty God as would be remitted by the performance of the old canonical penances corresponding to the same periods. To what extent of time in purgatory such periods of penance would correspond no one can possibly imagine, for "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (1 Peter iii. 8), and no one can know the extent of his guilt before Almighty God, who "will search Jerusalem with lamps" (Soph. i. 12), and who warns us that "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an ac-

count for it in the day of judgment." (Matt. xiii. 36.)

It is an article of our holy Faith that if we die in the state of grace, yet without having fully satisfied the divine justice by the complete discharge of the debt of temporal punishment remaining due on account of our sins and imperfections, we shall be condemned to discharge that debt in the fire of purgatory "even to the last farthing." This doctrine is founded on reason itself as well as on Holy Scripture and has been from the earliest times the teaching and practice of the Church. We know that nothing defiled can enter heaven; and we know that the many imperfections and venial failings from which even the just man is not entirely free, besides the stain which mortal sin, though forgiven, leaves behind it, are enough to prevent a soul from appearing immediately before the all-pure and holy God. We know, too, that Almighty God would not send to hell a soul united to Him by the bond of charity, free from the guilt at least of mortal sin. Hence it is only natural to conclude that there must be some place between heaven and hell where such souls suffer for a time until they are purified from all stain and made fit for the company of the elect in the

divine presence, for "there shall not enter into it anything defiled." (Apoc. xxi. 27.) Our divine Master Himself emphasized this very doctrine when He said: "He that shall speak against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come." (Matt. xii. 32.) Whilst St. Paul says: "Every man's work shall be manifest; for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." (1 Cor. iii. 13–15.) Whilst it is related in Holy Scripture that Judas Machabeus, the leader of the Jewish army, sent an offering to Jerusalem to have sacrifice offered for the repose of the souls of his soldiers who had been slain in battle. And the Holy Spirit, referring to his action, thus concludes: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." (2 Mach. xii. 46.)

Hence in every Mass that is offered the Church orders a special prayer for the dead. In all her offices and prayers she remembers

them in those beautiful and familiar words: "May the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy of God rest in peace." Not only that, but she has appointed a special day each year on which the Holy Sacrifice is solemnly offered for them and has consecrated for their special benefit the whole month of November, during which period she urges all her children to be particularly mindful of "those who have gone before us and sleep in the sleep of peace."

It will be well for us, then, in the first place, as the "Imitation of Christ" says, "to put not off the care of our souls to hereafter," for "there one hour of suffering will be more sharp than a hundred years spent here in the most rigid penance"; and, in the second place, to remember those holy souls who can not help themselves in that prison of purgatory by gaining all the indulgences we can in their favor. With them we share in the Communion of Saints, and we can help them by our prayers and other good works, but above all by gaining indulgences for them. Let us not be guilty of that foolish and uncharitable thought that they are sure to be happy in heaven and no longer need our prayers. This is cruel and selfish, and only serves for an excuse for our

coldness and carelessness which we are ashamed to acknowledge even to ourselves. It is very probable that some souls will be in purgatory until the very day of judgment, and, according to revelations made to the saints, many have to spend years in purgatory for a single venial fault. It is comparatively easy for us to atone for sin in this life, but when "the night cometh, when no man can work" (John ix. 4), when we can not any longer help ourselves, and the mercy of God has given place to His justice, then only shall we realize how long and arduous is the task of cleansing our souls from all stain and of satisfying the infinite justice of Almighty God for all our sins.

How soon the dear dead are forgotten! How soon the rough waves of the world wash away all remembrance of them from our minds! How soon the dark clouds of sorrow and mourning disappear and the bright sun of happiness shines out once more! For a time they were lamented and prayed for; then their names were not mentioned, lest sorrow should be renewed; and finally they were forgotten. And yet those poor souls for whom during life we professed such love and esteem have been calling to us in vain in those words of holy

Job: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me." (Job xix. 21.) If an angel of God went down into purgatory and asked them why they had not long ago been delivered, they might well answer like the poor man at the pool of Bethsaida answered our Divine Master that he had no friend to help him. (John, v.)

Even as a matter of self-interest we ought to be devoted to the assistance of the holy souls in purgatory, for, as the "Imitation of Christ" says, "we too shall have to pass the same way." We also shall stand in need of prayers to help us. If we are merciful to the souls in purgatory now we shall not be forgotten ourselves when we die, for, as Almighty God Himself says: "Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy." (Matt. v. 7.) Besides, though these holy souls can not help themselves, it is most probable that they can help us by their prayers. They are most dear to God, and He is most anxious that we should help them. He will bless us, therefore, if we do so, and He will surely listen to their prayers on our behalf. If we should have the happiness of liberating even one soul from purgatory we have for all time a most powerful

intercessor before the throne of God. For surely such a soul can not be ungrateful and will not fail to plead for us that the time of our banishment may also be shortened and that we, too, may enjoy His presence as soon as possible.

The very instinct of our hearts tells us that even when the grave is closed over our beloved dead all is not over between us. We naturally turn to God and ask Him to have mercy and to spare. We naturally feel drawn to intercede before His throne for the souls of the departed. Such an instinct is implanted in our hearts by the hand of God Himself. And hence the teaching of the Church concerning purgatory is one of her most beautiful and most consoling doctrines.

Let us, then, ever be mindful of the holy souls in purgatory. Let us do all that we can to help them. Above all, let us help those who were once near and dear to us and those poor souls who have none to help them. Let us make up for the past by redoubling our prayers on their behalf and applying to them —as we may by impetration—all the indulgences we can. Let us offer our Mass and Holy Communion for them, and if possible, have a special Mass said for them at least on

their anniversaries. By doing so we shall also be helping ourselves, for we shall have the merit of all the good works we perform for them, and God will reward us in a special manner for our charity to His friends. This the Holy Spirit promises when He says, "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." (2 Mach. xii. 46.)

XVI

SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

CONFIRMATION

"Labor as a good soldier of Christ Jesus."
(2 Tim. ii. 3.)

NOTWITHSTANDING the numerous and extraordinary lights, graces, and special privileges which the holy apostles enjoyed during the three years in which they were so intimately associated with their divine Master in the sacred ministry of the Gospel, listening to His words of heavenly wisdom, receiving instruction and guidance from His own sacred lips, and witnessing His many miracles; they were yet comparatively ignorant of His teaching, weak in faith, wanting in virtue, and cowardly in spirit. Up to the very last moment of their enjoyment of His blessed company on earth, even "until the day on which, giving commandments by the Holy Ghost to the apostles whom He had chosen, He was taken up. To whom also He showed himself alive after His passion, by many proofs, for

forty days appearing to them, and speaking of the kingdom of God, and eating together with them" (Acts i. 2–4), they were unaware of the true nature and full significance of His divine mission and heavenly kingdom which He had frequently reminded them was "not of this world" (John xviii. 36), for they said to Him on the very day of His ascension: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6.)

Often did our blessed Saviour upbraid them with their want of faith, saying to them: "Where is your faith?" (Luke viii. 25.) And again: "Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. viii. 26.) He rebuked them for their want of charity, saying to James and John: "You know not of what spirit you are. The Son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save." (Luke ix. 55, 56.) Even at the Last Supper He complained of their want of humility, for "there was also a strife amongst them, which of them should seem to be the greater." (Luke xxii. 24.) On the same occasion He sadly prophesied the threefold denial of Peter, which actually occurred almost immediately afterward. (Matt. xxvi. 34.) And when He was taken prisoner in the garden "the disciples all leaving Him

fled." (Ibid. 56.) Even after the wonderful and final proof of His divinity by His glorious resurrection from the dead, they were afraid to show themselves in public and remained in hiding, for "the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews." (John xx. 19.)

But all this was to be changed. "Simon, Simon," said Jesus to Peter, "behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren." (Luke xxii. 31, 32.) "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you," He said to His apostles, "and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts i. 8.)

This wonderful transformation was to be effected by the coming of the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete, the Comforter, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, whom Jesus was to send to them "to indue them with power from on high" (Luke xxiv. 49); to "convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment" (John xvi. 8); to strengthen and enlighten them in their mission; "But when the Paraclete

cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me. And you shall give testimony of Me" (John xv. 26.)

This consoling promise of Jesus was fulfilled on Pentecost Sunday, when the disciples "were all together in one place: And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon every one of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak." (Acts ii. 1–4.)

Immediately a wonderful change came over the hearts and souls and minds of all. They were completely transformed. Their hearts began to burn with the love of God and became filled with zeal for His honor and glory. Their minds were enlightened as with a flood of heavenly wisdom, and their whole desire was to preach and to spread the Gospel of Jesus Crucified, being prepared and even anxious to face all dangers, conquer all difficulties, brave all opposition, and suffer everything, even

death itself, counting it a joy and a privilege to suffer reproach for the name of Christ.

And, as events proved, they actually did so, for we read, for example, that the Jews "calling in the apostles, after they had scourged them, they charged them that they should not speak at all in the name of Jesus; and they dismissed them. And they indeed went from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus. And every day they ceased not in the temple, and from house to house, to teach and preach Christ Jesus." (Acts v. 40–42.)

By the goodness and mercy of our dear Redeemer this special visitation of the Holy Spirit is also vouchsafed to every Christian, though not in such extraordinary circumstances nor attended with such miraculous and remarkable exterior results as on the first Pentecost. Our Lord Jesus Christ would not leave any of His children orphans, but promised to send the Paraclete to abide with them and to comfort them forever. "I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever. The Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, nor

knoweth Him: but you shall know Him; because He shall abide with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you." (John xiv. 16–18.) So He instituted the sacrament of Confirmation to strengthen us, anoint us, seal us, and give us a pledge of eternal life. "Now He that confirmeth us with you in Christ," says St. Paul, "and that hath anointed us, is God; who also hath sealed us, and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. i. 21, 22.)

Here we have the whole nature and effects of the sacrament explained—its institution by Christ, its outward action, and the special graces and effects which it confers upon the worthy recipient. There is also mention of the special *seal* or character, which it imprints upon the soul and which never can be effaced, making us holy, pleasing, and faithful to God, filled with His Spirit, inflamed with His love, willing to suffer hardships of all kinds "as good soldiers of Christ Jesus."

Hence we find that the apostles everywhere conferred this holy sacrament upon those who had been baptized in the true Faith, for it was only to the apostles and their successors, the bishops of the Church, that our divine Master gave the commission to do so. Thus, when St.

Philip, who was only a deacon, had converted and baptized the Samaritans, and the apostles at Jerusalem heard of it, "they sent unto them Peter and John, who, when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. For He was not as yet come upon any of them; but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (Acts viii. 14–17.)

The necessary matter of the sacrament of Confirmation, as is clear from Holy Scripture, consists of the imposition or laying on of hands and the anointing with holy chrism, by the bishop. These actions he performs with the following ceremonies: First he stretches out his hands over those to be confirmed, and prays that the Holy Ghost may descend upon them. Then he lays his hand upon each one, at the same time anointing the forehead with holy chrism in the form of a cross, saying: "I sign thee with the sign of the cross, I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Finally he gives each one a slight blow on the cheek, saying, "Peace be to you," to remind him that now he is a true soldier of Christ and must be prepared to suffer anything

for His sake in order to possess true peace of heart and soul.

The holy chrism is composed of oil of olives and balsam. The former signifies the fullness of grace and strength conferred, and the latter (a sweet-smelling ointment used in preserving the bodies of the dead from corruption) represents the odor of sanctity and sound healthy life of a soul filled with the sweet presence of the Holy Spirit.

The dispositions necessary for the worthy reception of this holy sacrament are that we should be in the state of grace; that we should be sufficiently instructed in Christian doctrine and practice, according to our age and capacity; and that we should prepare ourselves by holy prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit, after the example of the apostles, who "were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." (Acts i. 14.)

In the first place, we must be in the state of grace, because Confirmation is a *sacrament of the living,* bestowing the special graces necessary to strengthen the soul against temptation and falling back into sin, and because "wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sin." (Wis. i. 4.) This

latter is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, which are conferred to a greater or less degree upon the worthy recipients according to the perfection of their dispositions, as was foretold by the prophet Isaias: "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him: the spirit of wisdom, and of understanding, the spirit of counsel, and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge, and of godliness. And he shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord." (Is. xi. 2, 3.)

In the second place, we must be properly instructed in the knowledge of Christian doctrine and practice, according to our age and capacity. Without such knowledge, the recipient can scarcely know the nature and extent of the obligations he undertakes by the reception of this holy sacrament. By it he is made a "soldier of Christ" and confirmed in the Faith, so that he must actively engage in the Christian warfare and show forth not only by his positive personal activity in the service of Christ that he is worthy of his great Leader and Master, but he must also be able to use with success in favor of others the spiritual weapons of prayer, faith, and knowledge, so as to be "ready always to satisfy every one that asketh him a reason of the hope which is in

him" (1 Peter iii. 15), for as a soldier of Christ he must follow the advice of St. Paul, who says: "Be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power. Put you on the armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places. Therefore take unto you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit (which is the word of God). By all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit; and in the same watching with all instance and supplication for all the saints . . . to make known the mystery of the Gospel." (Eph. vi. 10–19.)

How necessary, then, it is to receive this holy

sacrament is clear from the nature of the dangers and temptations that surround us and from the wonderful and special assistance which Confirmation secures for us. It would be sinful, therefore, to neglect so great a grace or refuse so rich a favor. It would be sacrilege to receive it in the state of sin and most disrespectful to the Holy Spirit not to prepare for its reception by holy prayer and recollection.

It is customary to take a new name when we receive Confirmation. This should be the name of some saint or servant of God, whose example we should set before ourselves and endeavor to follow, thus cultivating a special devotion to our holy patron. Also to have a godfather or godmother, according to the sex of the recipient, whose duties are similar to those of the sponsors at Baptism, and with regard to whom the same impediment of matrimony arises from the spiritual relationship thereby contracted.

It will be well for us, therefore, who have already been confirmed, to examine ourselves and see if the fruits of the coming of the Holy Spirit into our souls are such as they ought to be. If not, the fault is our own and is due to want of thought, neglect of God's grace, or

carelessness or unwillingness in the due fulfillment of our promises and obligations. We are not, indeed, called upon to active service as soldiers of Christ in the same manner as were the holy apostles and martyrs, who willingly laid down their very lives for their divine Master. We may not be called upon to suffer death for our holy Faith. But we are certainly expected not to deny it either by word or act. Our Divine Master has said: "Every one that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. But he that shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven. Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but the sword." (Matt. x. 32–34.) That is, we must make no peace with the enemies of Christ. We must never through human respect or any other cowardly or unworthy motive compromise our Divine Master's principles of truth, justice, and holiness. Some weak Catholics will insist that they are ready and willing to die for the Faith. But they have not the courage to trample upon a little human respect, to forego a little dishonest gain or filthy pleasure, for the sake of Christ. They will feel ashamed to be seen to

abstain from meat on days of abstinence, to say their prayers, to go to Mass, to bless themselves at table, or to engage in some other Catholic devotion. Very often they are sore afraid in such matters of the opinion of some ignorant, contemptible little heathen, even as St. Peter denied his Lord and Master at the word of a little "serving maid." (Matt. xxvi.)

Let us, then, show forth in our lives worthy fruits of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Let us be brave soldiers of Christ and confess Him not merely on great occasions when we are supported and encouraged by those around us, but also on small occasions when perhaps a little moral courage is required. Then God will bless us and strengthen us to fight the good fight like St. Paul and thereby win the crown of eternal life.

XVII

LIVING BREAD

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

"I am the living bread which came down from heaven." (John vi. 51.)

BORN again by Baptism, healed and cured by Penance, strengthened and perfected by Confirmation, the soul would still languish and "faint in the way" (Matt. xv. 32) to heaven were it not that our kind and loving Saviour made a marvelous provision for its spiritual nourishment by the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist, in which all the sweetness and strength and life and grace of the King of heaven Himself is contained in the person of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, true God and true man. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven," He says; "If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, for the life of the world." (John vi. 51, 52.)

Such was the promise of our divine Master after He had miraculously fed the multitude in the desert. But the Jews did not understand a statement of such tremendous import, and they "strove among themselves, saying: how can this man give us His flesh to eat?" But Jesus, even as when He said to Philip: "Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" and was answered by the apostles with the mere repetition of the difficulty, "He Himself knew what He would do," so He intended truly and literally, in the infinite tenderness of His divine love, by the exercise of His own divine power to give us His own body and blood for the nourishment of our souls. And so, instead of explaining away the literal truth of His statement and submitting any figurative sense (as He did when Nicodemus asked Him how a man could be born again) He merely repeated in a still more emphatic manner what He had already said: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life; and I will raise him up in the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed: and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh

My blood abideth in Me: and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread, shall live forever." (John vi. 54–59.)

This wonderful promise He fulfilled to the letter when at the Last Supper, on the very night before His passion, "taking bread, He gave thanks, and brake; and gave to them, saying: This is My body, which is given for you. Do this for a commemoration of Me. In like manner the chalice also, after He had supped, saying: This is the chalice, the new testament in My blood, which shall be shed for you." (Luke xxii. 19, 20.)

In the holy sacrifice of the Mass this command of our blessed Lord to His apostles is carried out daily upon our altars when the bread and wine are changed at the Consecration into the body and blood of Christ and we are thereby provided in holy communion with this heavenly Food, this Bread of angels, which is so wonderful in its effects upon the soul that all who worthily partake of it shall have everlasting life, and they who refuse or neglect it or receive it unworthily can not have life at all.

Hence St. Paul warns us to recognize and respect the real presence of Jesus in this Most Holy Sacrament, so that we may receive it with spiritual profit to our souls: "The chalice of benediction which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread, which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?" (1 Cor. x. 16.) And again: "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: Take ye, and eat: This is My body, which shall be delivered for you. This do for the commemoration of Me. In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: This chalice is the new testament in My blood. This do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come. Therefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment

to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord." (1 Cor. xi. 23–29.)

The *remote matter* of this holy sacrament accordingly consists of bread made of wheaten flour, and pure wine of the grape, because this was what Jesus Himself used in its institution, and He commanded His apostles to do the same. The outward visible sign consists of the exterior appearances of bread and wine—the *accidents* which remain after the *substance* has been changed by the power of God into the body and blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, in virtue of the change called *transsubstantiation*—and their reception by the communicant after the manner of food and drink. The inward grace is the intimate union with Jesus Himself.

The sacrament of Holy Eucharist is therefore pre-eminently superior to all the other sacraments in its dignity and excellence, because, though the latter contain special graces suitable for the special purposes of their institution, the former contains the very fountain and source of all grace—Jesus Himself. The other sacraments, too, exist only during the time of their actual administration as sacraments, but the Holy Eucharist remains with us in the tabernacle day and night for our con-

stant comfort and consolation and holy blessing, even as when Jesus walked in Galilee "virtue went out from him, and healed all." (Luke vi. 19.)

Nothing can be so important, therefore, as to understand thoroughly how to prepare ourselves to receive worthily and with proper fruit this wonderful source of divine grace and strength, this overflowing fountain of sweetness which contains all that our souls require in this world and in the next.

To receive holy communion worthily we must at least be in the state of grace, free from the guilt of mortal sin. If we are unfortunately at enmity with Almighty God our first duty must be to purify our souls in the holy sacrament of Penance. It would, indeed, be a most disrespectful and sacrilegious profanation, too horrible even to contemplate, to attempt to receive the most pure and holy body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ into a soul dead in sin. And just as food placed in a dead body will not only fail to nourish it but rather serve to increase its corruption, so the unworthy reception of holy communion will but render the sinner immeasurably more guilty than before. Hence St. Paul says: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eat-

eth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord." (1 Cor. xi. 29.) According to the Council of Trent, "He who desires to communicate should call to mind the injunction of the Apostle: *'Let a man prove himself.'* Now this necessary proving of oneself, according to the practice of the Church, consists in this, that no one who has been guilty of a grievous sin approach the Holy Eucharist unless he has first sacramentally confessed." (Sess. xviii., Ch. vii.)

It is to be feared that when Christians frequently receive holy communion without any apparent improvement in their lives as the result of it, they do not receive the precious body and blood of Christ as worthily as they ought. As this is the great sacrament in which the love of Almighty God for man is so pre-eminently shown, it is only to be expected that we should exhibit in its reception special proofs of the love of God and our neighbor in our own dispositions. Now the great test of the true love of God is the love of our neighbor. This is the test laid down and expected by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, "A new commandment I give unto you," He says: "That you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know

that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another." (John xiii. 34, 35.) Charity is, therefore, the great essential quality for a soul in which Almighty God is expected to take up His abode in such a special manner as in holy communion. "If we love one another," says St. John, "God abideth in us, and His charity is perfected in us. In this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us: because He hath given us of His spirit" (1 John iv. 12, 13); who concludes: "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar." (v. 20.)

It is not rash to conclude, therefore, that the reason why so many do not seem to profit by their frequent approach to holy communion is because they are wanting in this most necessary Christian virtue. Some are to be found who indulge in uncharitable conversation both before and after holy communion, and are habitually possessed by the spirit of uncharitableness instead of the spirit of their divine Master. They are always ready, as it is said, "to put the hard word on a neighbor." God has a very special hatred for such a disposition and for such a spirit, because it is so essentially opposed to the disposition and spirit of Jesus and to the divine nature itself. It is opposed,

therefore, to all union with God, and above all to that intimate union that exists between the soul and Jesus Christ in holy communion. The profession of love in such a soul is indeed a lie. "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?" says St. John (iv. 20).

St. Paul, in warning us not to receive unworthily, seems to refer to the disastrous consequences of this unfortunate want of charity in those who approach holy communion: "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord. Therefore there are many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep. But if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged." (1 Cor. xi. 29–31.) Which is confirmed by those words of St. John: "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not, abideth in death." (1 John iii. 14.) Let us, then, be not dead, but "alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi. 11); not infirm or weak, but "strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power." (Eph. vi. 10.) Let us "rise from sleep" and

examine our consciences in the light of the law of charity, especially with regard to our conversation concerning our neighbor. Then "if thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee; leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother: and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." (Matt. v. 23, 24.) Unfortunately in many cases the brethren of such people do not know what they have against them: and such people are disposed to take a very lenient view of, if they do not shut their eyes altogether against, their sins of uncharitableness. They approach Jesus like the traitor Judas, who "drew near to Jesus, for to kiss Him. And Jesus said to him: Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke xxii. 47, 48.)

Whilst freedom from mortal sin is absolutely necessary for the worthy reception of holy communion, we ought not to rest satisfied with this bare condition, but strive to adorn our souls with all the good dispositions possible. Above all, we should have a lively faith in the presence and power of Jesus, a firm hope in His love and generosity, and an ardent desire of being united to Him such as He Himself possesses: "With desire I have desired to eat

this pasch with you," He says. (Luke xxii. 15.)

At the same time we should not make the mistake of confounding our devotions of preparation or of thanksgiving with holy communion itself: nor feelings of sensible devotion or spiritual dryness with the success or otherwise of our own efforts or with the nature and extent of the graces received. Jesus Himself is our life and our grace. Our desire to please Him is our best offering. And the best proof of the fruit of our holy communions is our improvement in virtue, tested by the virtue of holy charity.

In order to provide for the greater reverence and respect with which we are to approach the Holy Table, the Church commands under pain of mortal sin a strict *natural fast,* as it is called, from the previous midnight. This means that from that time until after holy communion we must not partake of even the smallest amount of food, drink, or medicine. But, out of respect to the Blessed Sacrament, we are allowed to cleanse our mouth and teeth even though we should accidentally swallow a few drops of the water used for the purpose. For the same reason we are expected to be neat, clean, and humble in our dress and appearance, avoiding

all slovenliness as well as all singularity or fashionable extravagance. The vulgar display of "style" is entirely out of place on such occasion, above all others, and is completely unworthy of the meek and gentle Jesus.

After the reception of holy communion we should spend some time in thanksgiving for the wonderful favor we have received. This is the time for personal and loving intercourse with our dear Saviour, when He will be pleased to hear from us in our own simple way all our troubles, wants, hopes, fears, and aspirations. "Come to Me," He says, "all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (Matt. xi. 28.) It would be a great mistake, therefore, to spend all these precious moments reading our prayer-book. Whilst the acts of faith, hope, and love there given are excellent means of suggesting pious and appropriate sentiments and of opening up springs of fervor in our dry and arid souls, our divine Master expects us to commune more intimately with Him and does not expect fine language, noble sentiments, or poetic imagery, but the language of love which the heart speaks, the language of poverty which needs no expression, and the language of desire which speaks for itself. If we find that we can not pray as we

should wish, let us tell Him so and ask Him to teach us, like the apostles, who used to say: "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke xi. 1): "Lord increase our faith." (xvii. 5.) Whatever our sorrows, trials, difficulties, sins, or temptations, He will help us. "Learn of Me," He says, "and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light." (Matt. xi. 29, 30.) Doubly sweet and light, indeed, will that burden be when Jesus within us in holy communion helps us to bear it.

XVIII

A GREAT SACRAMENT

MATRIMONY

"They shall be two in one flesh." (Eph. v. 31.)

JUST as our divine Master provides in the holy sacraments for the particular needs of the souls of Christians in general, so He instituted also special sacraments for the supply of those special graces necessary for certain particular states of life in which the greater difficulties inseparable from them render extra assistance from Almighty God of the greatest importance. Thus He established the holy sacrament of Matrimony in order to give grace to those in the married state to bring up their children in His fear and love.

Marriage in itself is an indissoluble contract by which a man and a woman unite themselves by their free mutual consent to live together for life as husband and wife and to bring up children for God. This contract Our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to raise to the dig-

nity of a true sacrament so that the parties might secure a very special share of those graces necessary for the faithful fulfillment of such a serious, life-long, and difficult undertaking in God's service. For, as our divine Master Himself was pleased to explain, they must be so united to each other and must live so harmoniously together for the proper discharge of their various duties in this holy state that "for this cause shall a man leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh." (Matt. xix. 5.)

Such a close, intimate, and lasting union was to be also a sign of the indissoluble union that exists between Christ Himself and His holy Church, as St. Paul, who for these reasons calls Matrimony "a great sacrament," explains: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it: that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life: that He might present it to Himself, a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, as also

Christ doth the Church: because we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother: and shall cleave to his wife. And they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church." (Eph. v. 25–32.)

From this we see that the sacred bond of marriage can never be dissolved for any reason whatsoever as long as both parties are living. Such a serious and solemn undertaking, with its lifelong responsibilities and consequences, should not, therefore, be lightly entered into; but demands the best judgment and the purest intentions, for it can never be rescinded by any power on earth. "Therefore now they are not two but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder," says Christ, (Matt. xix. 6), who also distinctly lays down that "Every one that putteth away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery." (Luke xvi. 18.) Hence St. Paul insists, "To them that are married, not I but the Lord commandeth, that the wife depart not from her husband. And if she depart, that she remain

unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband." (1 Cor. vii. 10, 11.)

Some look for beauty of person in their life-partner; others for riches; and many for both. But neither riches, nor beauty, nor both will ensure the possession of those virtuous qualities which alone can render peaceful, happy, and successful the mutual discharge of such holy and important relations. "It is better to dwell in a wilderness than with a quarrelsome and passionate woman," says Holy Scripture. (Prov. xxi. 19.) Again: "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised." (Prov. xxxi. 30.) "Depart not from a good and wise wife, whom thou hast gotten in the fear of the Lord, for the grace of her modesty is above gold." (Ecclus. vii. 21.) "A virtuous woman rejoiceth her husband, and shall fulfill the years of his life in peace. A good wife is a good portion, she shall be given in the portion of them that fear God, to a man for his good deeds. Rich or poor, if his heart is good, his countenance shall be cheerful at all times." (Ecclus. xxvi. 2–4.) And the same may be applied with equal truth to the virtuous husband.

The *remote matter* of the sacrament of Matrimony consists of the bodies of the parties to the contract by which each shall belong to the other. The *proximate matter* is the actual transference of these rights by means of mutual significant words or signs. The *form* consists of the mutual acceptance of such transference freely given and received. From which it follows that in this sacrament the parties concerned are themselves the ministers of the sacred rite.

In order that the sacrament may be validly and mutually administered and received, however, the Church always insists upon certain conditions as necessary for a valid and proper contract as the necessary matter of the sacrament, so that it may not be exposed to the danger of nullity or even of uncertainty by the lack of anything essential. In like manner she insists upon the presence of the pastor of one of the parties and also two responsible witnesses.

The Church, of course, has the power of making any conditions she considers necessary according to circumstances as to what shall constitute a valid contract. This also the State attempts to regulate, and accordingly makes its own regulations with regard to the

conditions of the contract and the civil effects of it. Sometimes, unfortunately, the State exceeds its powers, and usurps the authority of the Church in a sacred matter that intimately concerns the spiritual welfare of her children. How erratically and how disastrously she sometimes interferes is alas, only too apparent in the multitude of evils that flow from such usurpation.

In order that this holy sacrament be lawfully as well as validly celebrated, therefore, the contract must be entered into freely on both sides by parties mutually capable of the marriage bond according to the requirements of Almighty God and His Church.

To make these requirements more clear, it is laid down that certain impediments render the contract, and consequently the sacrament, *invalid* or of no effect; and that certain other impediments render the celebration *unlawful* and consequently sinful, though valid in its effects. Thus, for instance, by the law of Almighty God Himself, marriage between parties related in the direct line is impossible. According to the special law of the Church, marriage between parties in the collateral line to the fourth degree (third cousins) is invalid also, unless for particular reasons she relaxes her

discipline and grants permission in particular cases to enter into such a contract. In the same way marriage between a Catholic and a non-Christian is invalid. And in like manner between a Catholic and a Protestant who go through a form of ceremony between them in the presence of a heretical minister or a State official. At one time the Church acknowledged such marriages between Christians as valid, but so many abuses followed from her leniency that she has now assumed full control of the matter and has even in the case of priests restricted the power of assisting even validly to the pastor of one of the parties or some priest appointed by him. Other impediments will be more fully explained when treating of the precept of the Church which concerns them.

The mind of the Church with regard to what are known as "mixed marriages" has always been that of hatred and disapproval. She has always viewed with alarm and anxiety the great danger of unhappiness both in this world and in the next to those who enter into such an intimate union of temporal and eternal interests without any corresponding union of mind or soul which is so impossible when one of the parties is not a Catholic. Almighty God Himself positively forbade His chosen people

to intermarry with those of a false religion on account of the almost certain danger to the truth faith of the believers. "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them," He said; "Thou shalt not give thy daughter to his son, nor take his daughter for thy son: For she will turn away thy son from following me, that he may rather serve strange gods, and the wrath of the Lord will be kindled, and will quickly destroy thee." (Deut. vii. 3, 4.) And sad experience has always shown that worldly peace and true Christian sanctity are almost impossible under such conditions. Mixed marriages were the cause of the Deluge, because the sons of the just married the daughters of the wicked and the whole world became corrupted in consequence. "The sons of God seeing the daughters of men, that they were fair, took to themselves wives of all which they chose. . . . And the earth was corrupted before God, and was filled with iniquity." (Gen. vi. 2–11.)

The children of mixed marriages seldom have the true faith. At most they are indifferent. They hear one thing from the father and the very opposite from the mother. What the one reverences the other despises. What one approves with devotion the other condemns

with ridicule or contempt. "And shall we be also disobedient and do all this great evil to transgress against our God, and marry strange women?" asks Holy Scripture. Catholics should therefore be very circumspect with regard to this matter, lest their hearts and minds be drawn away from what is right and proper and, being blinded by passion, fail to realize their danger until it is too late.

Even when special permission or dispensation is given in certain circumstances by the Church for the valid and lawful celebration of such marriages, she endeavors as best she can to provide against the evils aforesaid and insists upon a formal declaration by the non-Catholic party that he will not interfere in any way with the practice of his partner's religion, that all the children of both sexes be brought up in the Catholic Faith, and that the contract will last for life. But here arises one of the greatest difficulties. The non-Catholic may be perfectly willing to sign such a declaration, but only time and circumstances will be able to prove whether he is willing to stand by it. He may be "broadminded" enough to make all the necessary promises and to have no objection to any Catholic doctrine or practice, but such a disposition is not a proof of that high

sense of honor and responsibility which will lead to the faithful discharge of all the ensuing obligations. In many cases such a one is simply not very particular about any matter of religion or of conscience so long as he gets his own way and suffers no inconvenience. This the Church knows full well, and even when she unwillingly consents to such unions she will not therefore give them her blessing, nor will she allow them to be celebrated in the sanctuary or before the altar, but at most in the sacristy. Hence the only safe and helpful marriage is that where the Church herself presides over the nuptials of her own children, where both parties belong to "the household of the Faith," are guided by her wisdom, controlled by her authority, and assisted to bear the burden in peace and happiness by her blessing and protection as well as by the special graces of the holy sacrament of Matrimony worthily and fruitfully received.

When both parties are Catholics the following is the usual procedure: The priest, vested in surplice and white stole, attended by an acolyte holding a vessel of holy water, asks each party separately in the hearing of at least two witnesses: "Wilt thou take N., here present, for thy lawful wife [husband] according to

the rite of our holy mother the Church?" Both having answered "I will," they separately repeat the following pledge to each other, their right hands being joined: "I, N., take thee, N., for my lawful wife [husband], to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part." Then both kneel and the priest says: "I join you together in marriage, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." At the same time he makes the sign of the cross over them. He then sprinkles them with holy water and proceeds to bless the ring by making the sign of the cross over it three times, praying as follows: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. O Lord, hear my prayer. And let my cry come unto Thee. The Lord be with you. And with thy spirit. Let us pray. Bless, O Lord, this ring, which we bless in Thy name, that she who is to wear it, keeping true faith unto her husband, may abide in Thy peace and obedience to Thy will, and ever live in mutual love. Through Christ our Lord. Amen." He then sprinkles the ring in the form of a cross, and the bridegroom places it on the third finger of the left hand of the bride,

saying: "With this ring I thee wed, and I plight unto thee my troth." The priest says: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." The ceremony concludes with the following prayers: "Confirm, O God, what Thou hast wrought in us. From Thy holy temple in Jerusalem. Lord, have mercy on us. Christ, have mercy on us. Lord, have mercy on us. Our Father, etc., save Thy servants, O my God, who hope in Thee. Send them, O Lord, help from on high and protect them out of Sion. Be unto them, O Lord, a tower of strength from the face of the enemy. O Lord, hear my prayer. And let my cry come unto Thee. The Lord be with thee. And with thy spirit. Let us pray. Look down, we beseech Thee, Lord, upon these Thy servants, and graciously protect Thy institutions, whereby Thou hast provided for the propagation of mankind; that those who are joined together by Thine authority may be preserved by Thy help. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

When the special blessing, called the "Nuptial Blessing," is given, the "Nuptial Mass" is here celebrated. This Mass can be celebrated only on certain days, and only when the marriage is duly *solemnized;* not therefore, within

the *forbidden times* (from the first Sunday of Advent to Epiphany and from Ash Wednesday to Low Sunday, inclusive). It has special Introit, Prayer, Epistle, Gospel, Gradual, Offertory, Secret, Communion, and Post-Communion. A very special blessing is pronounced over the newly-married couple, as they kneel at the foot of the altar. This consists of two parts. The first part is pronounced after the *Pater Noster*, and consists of a long and most beautiful prayer for all necessary blessings. The second part is pronounced immediately before the ordinary Blessing of the Mass, and is as follows: "May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and may He fulfill His blessing upon you, that you may see your children's children unto the third and fourth generation, and may afterward have everlasting life, without end, by the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, liveth and reigneth God, world without end. Amen."

XIX

THE LAST JOURNEY

EXTREME UNCTION

"It is appointed unto men once to die." (Heb. ix. 27.)

THOUGH at all times we are exposed to the attacks of "our adversary the devil," who, according to St. Peter, "as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter v. 8), we are in most danger of them when they are most vehement and when we should naturally be expected to be less able to resist them; namely, at the hour of our death. Then "the devil hath great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time." (Apoc. xii. 12.) But our dear Lord and Master Jesus Christ foresaw and provided for our difficulty by instituting a special sacrament to afford us special strength and most powerful protection on this very occasion—the sacrament of Extreme Unction. Hence the Holy Council of Trent declares: "As our most merciful Re-

deemer, who desired that at all times His servants should be provided with wholesome remedies against the darts of their enemies, in the other sacraments gives Christians the greatest helps to enable them to pass their lives in a Christian manner, and free from any grievous spiritual detriment, so He hath fortified the latter end of our life with the most powerful protection of the sacrament of Extreme Unction. For, though our adversary seeks and seizes during our whole life every possible occasion of ruining our souls, yet there is no time wherein he more vehemently exerts all his strength and art to ruin us entirely, and destroy if possible our confidence in the mercy of God, than when he sees the last moment of life approaching." (Sess. xiv.)

"Extreme Unction," as the catechism says, "is the sacrament which gives grace to die well, and is instituted chiefly for the spiritual strength and comfort of dying persons."

The *remote matter* of this sacrament is oil of olives specially consecrated by the bishop for the purpose on Holy Thursday. The *proximate matter* consists of the anointing of the various senses by a priest, accompanied by the *form* of prayer prescribed by the Church according to what is laid down in Holy Scrip-

ture: "Is any man sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man: and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him" (James v. 14, 15).

Here we see in the first place why the sacrament is called "Extreme Unction," or the *last* Anointing, because it is the last unction which the Christian receives. The first we receive at Baptism, the second at Confirmation, and the last when we are in danger of death by sickness. Here, too, we see explained the effects of the sacrament; namely, the forgiveness of sin and the removal of its consequences, such as anxiety of mind, fear of death, impatience in suffering, weakness in temptation, despair or presumption, as well as the remains of temporal punishment due to sin already forgiven. Hence the person receiving it must first be in the state of grace; but if it is impossible to receive the sacrament of Penance beforehand for any reason, such as inability to confess, then, if the person be truly contrite even the guilt of mortal sin as well as hidden venial sin will be remitted—"if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him."

It will be seen from the very nature and intention of the institution that this sacrament is intended only for those who are in danger of death by sickness, and who are capable of sinning. Hence it can not be given to those in danger of death from any other reason, such as a storm at sea, going into action on the field of battle, proceeding to execution, or the like. Neither can it be given to infants or to those who have never had the use of reason, or those who are dying impenitent or in the actual commission of mortal sin.

Oil is a sign of strength and beauty. It is used by athletes to give suppleness and agility to their muscles, and by others to improve their personal appearance. It is also symbolical of grace, charity, and spiritual consolation, as it is used for food, medicine, and light, and naturally indicates peace and joy, health, and plenty. "God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness," says the Psalmist (Ps. xliv. 8): and, "When you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad . . . but thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head," says our divine Master. (Matt. vi. 16, 17.)

What a happiness, then, for the poor wearied soul on its last journey toward eternity to have at hand such a secure and powerful help

from Almighty God Himself to strengthen and console him on his way! What a serious obligation there is, therefore, upon his responsible friends or relations to secure in good time the services of the priest, so that the poor soul may not only receive the benefit of the Last Anointing but may also be properly disposed to receive its benefits to the full by previously receiving the holy sacraments of penance and the Blessed Eucharist. When holy communion is thus given to those in danger of death it is called the Holy *Viaticum*, which means "provision for a journey," and the ordinary rule of fasting from the previous midnight does not then bind. On the same occasion also it is usual to administer the Last Blessing, to which is attached a plenary indulgence at the moment of death, the only condition being that the dying person pronounce the Holy Name of Jesus.

As from the nature of the case the poor sick person must generally depend upon the good offices of those around him in order to secure all these wonderful favors in good time and in respectful circumstances, it becomes the duty of every good Catholic to know how and when to send for the priest, how to receive him when he comes, and in what manner to prepare the

sick person and the sick-room itself for the becoming administration of the last sacred and solemn rites of Holy Church.

As this holy sacrament is intended for the special purpose of giving those in danger of death by sickness the grace to die well, or (if it be the holy will of God to spare them) to help them to recover their usual health and strength, the sick-call should not be delayed until the patient is beyond all hope, is delirious, unconscious, or actually dying; although it should not be abandoned altogether for that reason, as has unfortunately happened through the ignorance of some, for, as we have seen, provided a person be inwardly contrite, the sacrament of Extreme Unction takes effect even if the sick man is unconscious—"if he be in sins they shall be forgiven him"—and so his soul may be saved by this holy sacrament. Neither should we be too sure that death has actually occurred, for it is almost impossible to ascertain this fact with certainty for a very long period indeed.

The call to the priest should be sent in good time by a responsible person. As it is a very important and serious message it should not be entrusted to very young children or strangers, especially non-Catholics. The messenger should be able to state whether the patient

is vomiting, delirious, partly or entirely unconscious, or give any other necessary information as to his physical condition, so that the priest may know what sacraments the sick person will be able to receive and whether the call is urgent and immediate. If the priest be not at home at the time, care should be taken to leave the correct name and above all the correct address of the patient or his friends.

Meanwhile, the sick-room and the patient should be made neat and clean, the former by the removal of all superfluous clothes and furniture and the latter by washing his face, hands, and feet, and cleansing and rinsing his mouth. A small table covered with a clean white cloth should be placed in front of the patient and toward the side of the room, so that he may see it without effort. On this should be placed a crucifix, with a wax candle at each side and a *few* flowers in small vases without any water. Also a small open vessel of holy water with a little sprig, or sprinkling-brush, a small glass of pure water, and a spoon. A few little cubes of bread or a little salt, or five or six small pellets of cotton-wool (to be used for removing the remains of the holy oil from the priest's fingers) should be on a small plate at the side of the table. The middle of

the front of the table should be left quite clear. There should be near at hand a basin and towel for the priest to wash his hands, and a chair near the head of the bed which he may use whilst hearing the confession of the sick person.

When the priest arrives he should be met at the door with a lighted candle by the person who is to assist him in the sick-room, who will genuflect on one knee and immediately precede him into the sick-room, where the candles are already lighted. As the priest is carrying the Blessed Sacrament on his breast for the Viaticum of the sick person he should not be saluted or addressed in any way, but received in respectful silence. It is most disrespectful to our blessed Lord to invite the priest into another room to wait while the sick-room is being prepared and to endeavor to entertain him in the meantime with ordinary conversation. It is the other extreme for all to hurry away as soon as he is seen to arrive. At least the members of the household should remain on their knees until the Blessed Sacrament is placed on the table prepared and the blessing has been given. This the priest proceeds to do immediately after he has genuflected to the Sacred Host in the pyx, as follows:

On entering the sick-room he says: "Peace be unto this house. And to all who dwell therein." Then having placed the Blessed Sacrament on the corporal he adores upon his knees. After which he takes holy water and sprinkles the sick person and the room, reciting at the same time a portion of the Psalm *Miserere,* beginning "Sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow," and praying God to "guard, cherish, protect, visit, and defend all who dwell in this house." All should then rise, genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament, and leave the room so as to give the priest an opportunity of hearing the confession. When the latter is concluded he gives a sign and all again return and remain on their knees during the remainder of the ceremonies, praying for the spiritual and temporal welfare of the sick and commending themselves to God.

As soon as they re-enter, all should immediately recite the Confiteor in a low tone. Then the priest pronounces the absolution in favor of the sick and immediately administers the Holy Viaticum, saying: "Receive, brother [or sister], the Viaticum of the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ who may guard thee from the wicked enemy and lead thee unto life everlast-

ing. Amen." After which he purifies the pyx with a little water, which he gives to the sick person to drink from the spoon provided for the purpose, and prays: "O Holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, we earnestly beseech Thee that the most sacred body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, which our brother [or sister] hath now received, may be to him [or her] an eternal remedy of both body and soul."

And now he proceeds to administer the sacrament of Extreme Unction beginning by the recitation of several most beautiful prayers for various favors and blessings for the sick, such as eternal happiness, divine prosperity, serene joy, fruitful charity, and everlasting life; that the demons may be put to flight and angels of peace take their place, so as to remove all fear, distress, and danger and bring a blessing and protection from God upon all.

Those present again recite the Confiteor as before, after which the priest proceeds, making a triple sign of the cross: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, may all power of the devil be extinguished in thee by the imposition of our hands and by the invocation of all the holy angels, archangels,

patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and all the saints together. Amen."

Meanwhile, the one who is assisting prepares the hands, feet, etc., of the sick person for the anointing. Then the priest takes a little of the Holy Oil on his thumb and lightly anoints each of the five senses in the form of a cross—eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, and feet—saying at each: "By this holy anointing and by His most benign mercy, may the Lord forgive thee whatsoever sins thou hast committed by thy sight [etc.]." Having removed the oil by means of the pieces of cotton wool and washed his hands, he next prays for the special graces necessary for the sick, asking God to send him help from on high, as promised in the words of St. James, to cure him, heal him, and forgive him his sins; to remove all troubles of body, mind, and soul; and to restore him to health if it be God's holy will; to raise him up, strengthen, protect, and defend him; and to restore him to His Holy Church.

Finally, the Last Blessing is given. To this is attached a plenary indulgence at the hour of death. He commends the poor soul into the hands of its Creator, Redeemer, and Sancti-

fier; pronounces the final absolution; and if a sacred particle is remaining in the pyx he blesses him in silence with the Most Holy Sacrament.

No wonder, then, the Catechism of the Council of Trent declares: "It is a very grievous sin to defer the holy Unction until, all hope of recovery now lost, life begins to ebb, and the sick person is fast verging into a state of insensibility. It is obvious that, if administered while the mental faculties are yet unimpaired, while reason still exercises her dominion, and the mind is still capable of eliciting acts of faith and of directing the will to sentiments of piety, the sacrament must contribute to a more abundant participation of the graces which it imparts."

Happy is he, therefore, who enjoys all these sacred and blessed privileges before it is too late to secure their full and lasting effects. How fortunate must that soul be when it stands before the judgment-seat of God, cleansed, purified, sanctified, and strengthened by the wonderful provision of our dear Lord and Master for its nourishment, health, and security; bearing upon it the Sign of the Son of man Himself; ready to be admitted by its Creator into the kingdom prepared for it, to

its true home in the City of the Heavenly Jerusalem on the Holy Mount, with that sense of joy and peaceful security of one who has made in safety a long, last journey home.

PART III

SPRINGS OF WATER

"Waters are broken out in the desert, and streams in the wilderness. And that which was dry land shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." (Is. xxxv. 6, 7.)

XX

SACRED FOUNTAINS

THE SACRAMENTALS IN GENERAL—THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

"There shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: for the washing of the sinner." (Zach. xiii. 1.)

WHILST the holy sacraments are worthily compared to channels through which abundant waters of grace flow from the Saviour's fountains to supply all the wants of the soul, as foretold by the prophets—"Waters shall flow through all the rivers of Juda; and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the torrent of thorns" (Joel iii. 18)—such sources of spiritual refreshment must be sought at stated times and in special places, at certain established inns or recognized resting-places, as it were, along the highways.

But there are other more numerous though

lesser streams and smaller springs everywhere along the bypaths, at all times and in every place readily accessible, where we may refresh our weary souls as often as we please until we can seat ourselves in the Master's House where "there are many mansions" (John xiv. 2) in which we can enjoy longer rest and partake of more solid and lasting refreshment, for "waters are broken out in the desert, and streams in the wilderness. And that which was dry land shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water." (Is. xxxv. 6, 7.)

These are those wonderful means of grace, called "sacramentals" because so like the sacraments themselves in their nature and effects, though not instituted by Jesus Christ Himself nor infallible in their effects. They consist of those numerous prayers, pious objects, sacred signs and ceremonies instituted for the most part by the Church and blessed by her with her official invocation to Almighty God that, through the merits and intercession of her divine Spouse, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, whosoever makes use of them with a contrite heart and pious dispositions may receive thereby those special helps which she asks in favor of her children.

Hence the effects of the sacramentals are not, as in the case of the sacraments, infallible. But, as "the continual prayer of a just man availeth much" (James v. 16), we may rest assured that Almighty God is pleased to pay special attention to the prayer of His most holy Spouse in favor of her children. These sacred signs and ceremonies are also most useful means of exciting pious dispositions in the soul and so of being a worthy preparation for the greater graces to be derived from the holy sacraments themselves. Besides, the Church almost always attaches to their devout use rich indulgences in order that we may not only refresh our souls by their powerful assistance but may also lessen the load of the temporal punishment due to us on account of our sins and imperfections.

As our holy mother the Church is so anxious that her children should not only free themselves from the guilt of sin by sincere repentance but that they should also frequently renew their spirit of love and gratitude toward Almighty God, she places constantly before our minds the greatest and best of all means of causing us to realize the immense love of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of obtaining His mercy and forgiveness, the most simple as well as the

most easily available of all her sacramentals—the *holy cross.*

We have already seen something of the wonderful devotion of the early Christians to this sacred symbol of man's redemption; how they loved to fashion crosses out of various materials, wore them about their person, placed them in prominent positions in their houses and temples, and marked with the same holy sign the sacred vessels and vestments and everything that was most dear to them.

Not only did they make use of those permanent reminders of the death and passion of our dear Redeemer, but they also made the sign over themselves, accompanying the action with the devout invocation of the Blessed Trinity, at the beginning and at the end of every pious action, and indeed of almost everything that they did. "At every step and movement," says Tertullian, who lived in the second century, "whenever we come in or go out, when we dress ourselves, or prepare to go abroad, at the bath, at the table, when lights are brought in, on lying or sitting down, whatever we be doing, we make the sign of the cross upon our foreheads." "Everywhere," says St. John Chrysostom, "is the symbol of the cross present to us. On this account we paint and sculpture

it on our houses, our walls, and our windows, we trace it on our brows, and we studiously imprint it on our souls and minds." "More precarious than the universe, the cross glitters on the diadems of emperors. Everywhere it is present to my view. I find it among princes and subjects, men and women, virgins and married people, slaves and freemen. All continually trace it on the noblest part of the body, the forehead, where it shines like a column of glory. At the Sacred Table, it is there; in the ordination of priests, it is there; in the mystic Supper of Our Saviour, it is there. It is drawn on every part of the horizon—on the tops of houses, on public places, in inhabited parts and in deserts; on roads, on mountains, in woods, on hills, on the sea, on the masts of ships, on islands, on windows, over doors, on the necks of Christians, on beds, on garments, books, arms, and banquet couches, in feasts, on gold and silver vessels, on precious stones, on the pictures of the apartments. It is made over sick animals, over those possessed by the demon; in war, in peace, by day, by night, in pleasant reunions and in penitential assemblies. It is who shall seek first the protection of this admirable sign. What is there surprising in this? The sign of the cross is the type of our

deliverance, the monument of the liberation of mankind, the souvenir of the forbearance of Our Lord. When you make it, remember what has been given for your ransom, and you will be the slave of no one. Make it, then, not only with your fingers, but with your faith. If you thus engrave it on your forehead, no impure spirit will dare to stand before you. He sees the blade with which he has been wounded, the sword with which he has received his death-blow."

By the combined ceremony of making the sign of the cross and of reciting the usual invocation to the Holy Trinity we profess our faith in the sacred mysteries of the Unity and Trinity of God; the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of Our Saviour. It is at the same time an act of faith, an act of hope, and an act of love. No wonder, then, St. Paul exclaims: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world." (Gal. vi. 14.)

This holy sign is made by Christians in various ways. The ordinary method is to place the right hand to the forehead, saying, "In the name of the Father"; then to the breast, saying, "and of the Son"; then to the left and right

shoulders, saying, "and of the Holy Ghost"; then joining the hands, saying, "Amen." At other times, as, for instance, at the beginning of the Gospel at Mass, the sign is traced in silence on the forehead, lips, and breast successively, a small cross being made on each with the extremity of the thumb. "We impress the sign of the cross upon the forehead," says Dr. Rock, "not only in reference to that mystic Tau, which, on the day of judgment, will be the characteristic of divine election, to distinguish the favorites of Heaven from the objects of its vengeance; but to manifest a desire that the wisdom of the cross may beam upon and illuminate the darkness of our minds, and make us understand the words of God which are about to be spoken to us. It is imprinted on the mouth, in order to bring to our remembrance that saying of the Royal Prophet: 'Let a watch, O Lord, be before my mouth, and a door round about my lips'; and to instruct us to keep such a guard upon our tongue that it may never utter anything irreverent toward God, or uncharitable toward our neighbor. It is signed upon the bosom in order to banish from the heart every disorderly affection, every dangerous inclination, and every sentiment of pride or vanity that ill becomes the followers of

Jesus, 'who humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.' " (Philipp. ii. 8, 9.)

When the priest blesses the people at Mass, or dedicates any pious object to the special service of Almighty God, or to any other sacred purpose, he traces the sign of the cross in the air over it, with his right hand extended toward it, sometimes in silence, sometimes with the use of some special form of prayer or invocation, as directed by the rubrics. In the administration of the sacraments, in all the ceremonies of her Ritual, and above all in the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the Church makes constant use of this holy sign. She specially consecrates the hands of her priest so that when he makes the sign of the cross over any objects or persons they may be blessed and sanctified, as the bishop prays when he anoints the hands of the newly ordained priest for this very purpose, saying: "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to consecrate these hands by this unction and our blessing, that whatsoever they bless may be blessed, and whatsoever they consecrate may be consecrated and sanctified, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ."

Hence when the priest makes the sign of the cross over beads, crucifixes, medals, statues,

pictures, or other pious objects, they are specially sanctified in the name of the Church and by the power of Our Lord Jesus Christ, so that whosoever carries them about with him or venerates them in any way receives the blessing of Almighty God which the Church invokes upon the objects and upon those who devoutly use or honor them. Frequently some special prayer is added and some special indulgence is granted in favor of those who in using them comply with certain simple conditions and are animated with the proper dispositions. Thus when a crucifix is blessed the priest prays in the name of the Church: "We beseech Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty, eternal God, that Thou wouldst deign to bless this symbol of Thy cross, that it may be a salutary remedy for mankind, that it may be productive of firm faith, fruitfulness of good works, redemption of souls; that it may be a comfort and a protection and a safeguard against the wicked attacks of the infernal enemy."

There is no devotion so capable of moving our hearts to contrition and the love of Jesus as devotion to the crucifix, the emblem of the sacred passion and death of our divine Redeemer. In it is fulfilled that prophecy of Zachary: "I will pour out upon the house of David, and

upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace, and of prayers: and they shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over him, as the manner is to grieve over the death of the firstborn." (xii. 10.) Hence Catholics reverence the crucifix above all other images and pay most solemn homage to it as the very representation of the love of Jesus for us in His Sacred Passion.

We reverence the crucifix in two ways. In the first place, we honor it on account of what it represents to us and on account of the image which it bears. Thus we also honor and respect any picture, photograph, or statue of a dear friend, whom it represents. Thus a mother respects and weeps over the lock of hair of a dear dead child, or kisses its portrait. Thus we, too, honor an envoy, governor, or ambassador, on account of what he represents to us of the power and glory of the sovereign who has sent him in his name.

But we honor the crucifix in a very special manner on Good Friday at the ceremony called *"The Adoration of the Cross."* On that occasion the cross is set up to represent the very cross of Calvary and to be specially honored by the faithful as such in a formal and solemn

manner. For, just as an ambassador may be honored at all times on account of the sovereign whom he represents, so on special occasions he may be taken actually to represent the sovereign, to act in his name, and to receive the royal honors that are due to the sovereign alone. But as no one would be so foolish as to mistake him for the actual person he represents on either of these occasions, so no one could be so foolish as to imagine that when we honor the crucifix at all times, or with such special reverence and respectful homage on Good Friday, that we mistake the mere material cross or figure for Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, or deprive Him of any of that love and respect which we are so anxious to manifest toward Him. And yet we have been called "idolaters" for doing so. It would be just as reasonable to suppose that a mother would be jealous of the love and respect which she found her child exhibiting to her photograph, as that Almighty God would be displeased at our manifestation of love for Him whom we see hanging on the cross, or that He would deem us guilty of transferring our affections and respect from our Creator and Redeemer to the wood, stone, or metal of the crucifix.

To those who devoutly make the sign of the

cross in the ordinary way the Church grants an indulgence of fifty days, the only conditions being that they be at least of contrite heart and devoutly invoke the Holy Trinity, saying: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Moreover, this indulgence may be gained as often as we please by repeating the action and the words.

How careful and reverent, then, should we not be in making use of this holy sign. But, alas, how sad it is to see how apparently wanting in reverence are many of those whom we see carelessly and thoughtlessly performing this sacred ceremony from mere routine. How many do we not see ashamed to make it at all when it is the custom for all good Catholics to do so. We should always bless ourselves and the food of which we are about to partake when we sit down to meals, and likewise after meals, as a thanksgiving to God for His everlasting goodness to us. If we are traveling, or with strangers, it is not necessary to make ourselves conspicuous by making the sign ostentatiously. It is quite easy to make it in a reverent and proper manner, but without being remarkable in our demonstration.

If we only realized what a powerful instrument of protection and of divine grace this

holy sign is to the well-disposed Christian, we should make it more frequently and with far greater reverence and devotion. "The sign of the cross," says St. Ephraim, "is the invincible armor of the Christian. Soldier of Christ, let this armor never leave you, either by day or by night, at any moment, or in any place; without it undertake nothing. Whether you be asleep or awake, watching or walking, eating or drinking, sailing on sea or crossing rivers, have this breastplate ever on you. Adorn and protect each of your members with this victorious sign and nothing can injure you. There is no buckler so powerful against the darts of the enemy. At the sign of this the infernal powers, affrighted and trembling, take to flight."

Let us, then, frequently and carefully, and with the greatest faith, reverence, and devotion, make the sign of the cross, especially when we rise from sleep or retire to rest; whenever we go out; whenever we are in any danger of soul or body, or require the special assistance of Almighty God. Thus will the prophecy of Zachary be fulfilled in our regard: "They shall call on My name, and I will hear them. I will say: Thou art My people: and they shall say: The Lord is my God" (xiii. 9), for we shall be marked with His holy sign

and have ever before our eyes, on our foreheads, and in our hearts that precious emblem and effective cause of our salvation, so that we may say with St. Paul: "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ." (Gal. vi. 14.)

XXI

WHITER THAN SNOW

HOLY WATER

"Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow." (Ps. l. 9.)

In order that we may as frequently as possible be impressed with the necessity of constantly purifying our souls and continually aiming at that perfection of sanctity to which all Christians are bound to aspire, according to the express command of our divine Master —"Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48)—our holy mother the Church has instituted for our use and benefit, as often as we wish to avail ourselves of it, that beautiful and expressive sacramental, so akin in its nature, signification, and effects to the holy sacrament of Baptism itself, *blessed* or *holy water.* In nearly all her blessings and in the ceremonies con-

nected with some of the sacraments its use is distinctly prescribed.

There are four different kinds of blessed or holy water, according to the manner of blessing and the object for which it is particularly intended. That most rarely used is called *Gregorian water,* from the fact that Pope Gregory IX prescribed a special water to be used by bishops in the consecration of churches and in some other episcopal functions. This is blessed by the bishop with special ceremonial; and wine, ashes, and salt are mixed with it.

Then there is *Baptismal water,* which is regularly blessed with great solemnity on the eves of Easter and Pentecost, and is used only in the actual administration of Baptism. The ceremonies used in the blessing are most interesting. After the blessing of the new fire and the paschal candle on Easter Saturday morning, a procession is formed and the celebrant, after reciting appropriate prayers at the altar, proceeds to the baptismal font, in which the water to be blessed has already been prepared. He immediately sings in a solemn manner a special Preface for the occasion. At various intervals during the chant he successively divides the water with his hand in the form of a

cross, lays his hand flat upon its surface, makes a triple sign of the cross over it, divides it toward the four points of the compass, breathes thrice upon it, and plunges into it thrice successively at varying depths, lastly to the bottom of the font, the newly-blessed paschal candle. Then he removes the candle and sprinkles the people. Meanwhile some of the water is removed and set aside for the private use of the faithful in their own homes. This is what is commonly known as *Easter water,* and is carefully preserved and used by the people with extraordinary care, reverence, and devotion.

After the aspersion the celebrant returns to the font and pours oil of catechumens into the remaining water to be used for baptism. Then he pours in holy chrism. Finally he pours in both holy oils together, saying at the same time: "May this mixture of the chrism of sanctification and oil of unction and baptismal water, be made in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." The font is then covered in order to keep out all dust and to preserve it from any possible irreverence. The water thus blessed is used for the administration of Baptism, and

for that purpose alone, until the time for the next blessing comes round again; namely, the eve of Pentecost.

It was the custom of the Jews to wash their hands before prayer in order to signify and remind them of the purity of heart and the sincerity of intention with which all should approach Almighty God for the performance of that important and solemn exercise. "Before prayer prepare thy soul: and be not as a man that tempteth God," says Holy Scripture. (Ecclus. xviii. 23.) Hence Almighty God Himself definitely ordained that the necessity for such inward dispositions should be impressed in a particular manner on the minds of those who were about to approach Him in the tabernacle or temple, by the explicit directions given to Moses regarding the outward ceremony: "Thou shalt make also a brazen laver with its foot, to wash in: and thou shalt set it between the tabernacle of the testimony and the altar. And water being put into it, Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and feet in it: when they are going into the tabernacle of the testimony, and when they are to come to the altar, to offer on it incense to the Lord." (Ex. xxx. 18–20.)

Following this custom, even in the time of

the apostles, the Church placed vessels of water at the entrances to her temples for the use of the faithful, who performed a similar ceremony. This water she afterward solemnly blessed and dedicated with special ceremonies immediately before the celebration of Mass, and after the blessing the celebrant sprinkled the people whilst the choir sang: "Thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow." This is the ceremony now known as the *Asperges,* which takes place before the principal Mass on Sundays. The ceremony concludes with the prayer: "Hear us, O holy Lord, Father Almighty, Eternal God, and vouchsafe to send Thy holy angel from heaven, to guard, cherish, protect, visit, and defend all those who are assembled together in this house. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

The ceremony at present in use for the blessing of what may be called ordinary holy water is performed at any suitable time or place, not necessarily Sundays, or before Mass. In this, as in everything else, as has been frequently observed, the Church is most lavish in her use of the sign of the cross, that sacred symbol in which is all her hope of life and

light and strength and salvation for her children, knowing that "neither is there salvation in any other." (Acts iv. 12.) She will use nothing in the immediate service of Almighty God without first making over it this holy symbol and thus driving away all power of the devil, who has since the fall of our first parents great influence over even inanimate nature. Nay, she formally and officially "exorcises" him; that is, conjures or commands him, again and again, by her divine authority, to depart altogether from those things which she is about to devote specially to God's service, so that, being freed from all diabolical influence, they may be rendered not only harmless to man but even useful to him in attaining his salvation and sanctification; for, as, according to St. Paul, "the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him that made it subject, in hope: because also itself shall be delivered from the servitude of corruption" (Rom. viii. 20, 21), so, according to the same apostle, "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected that is to be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." (1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.)

As water is a symbol of cleanliness and

purity and is everywhere to be found, so salt is the symbol of freshness, soundness, and freedom from corruption, and is in constant and frequent use everywhere. It is related in Holy Scripture that when the prophet Eliseus was approached by the inhabitants of Jericho with the complaint that the waters were bad and the ground barren, he performed a miraculous cure of both evils by the use of salt. "And the men of the city said to Eliseus: Behold the situation of this city is very good, as thou, my lord, seest: but the waters are very bad, and the ground barren. And he said: Bring me a new vessel, and put salt into it. And when they had brought it, he went out to the spring of the waters, and cast the salt into it, and said: Thus saith the Lord: I have healed these waters, and there shall be no more in them death or barrenness. And the waters were healed unto this day, according to the word of Eliseus, which he spoke." (4 Kings ii. 19–22.)

As the corruption of sin is due to man's foolishness, so innocence and purity of life are the results of heavenly wisdom. Hence in Holy Scripture the wicked are called *fools,* and the just are called *wise.* Thus also salt signifies that heavenly wisdom which preserves

true sanctity and saves from corruption by sin not only the souls of the good and virtuous but also the souls of those who are edified and sanctified by their example. Thus our divine Master said to His apostles: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?" (Matt. v. 13.)

Having in view, then, all these beautiful and salutary reminders of what we ought to be in the holy service of Almighty God, the Church in preparing holy water for the use of the faithful orders the following procedure: The priest, vested in surplice and violet stole (the sign of penance), makes the sign of the cross upon himself and then immediately proceeds to exorcise the salt, making the sign of the cross over it where shown, and saying: "I exorcise thee, O creature of salt, by the living ✠ God, by the true ✠ God, by the holy ✠ God, by that God who, by the prophet Eliseus, commanded thee to be cast into the water to cure its barrenness; that thou mayest by this exorcism be made beneficial to the faithful, and become to all of those who make use of thee healthful both to soul and body; and that in what place soever thou shalt be sprinkled, all illusions and wickedness and crafty wiles of

Satan may be chased away, and depart from that place; and every unclean spirit commanded in His name who is to come to judge the living and the dead and the world by fire. Amen."

Then he recites the prayer: "O Almighty and everlasting God, we most humbly implore Thy infinite mercy, that thou wouldst vouchsafe by Thy power to bless ✠ and to sanctify ✠ this Thy creature of salt, which Thou hast given for the use of mankind; that it may be to all who take it for the health of mind and body; and that whatever shall be sprinkled with it shall be freed from all uncleanness, and from all the assaults of wicked spirits, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the Holy Ghost forever and ever. Amen."

After which he exorcises the water, saying: "I exorcise thee, O creature of water, in the name of God ✠ the Father Almighty, and in the name of Jesus Christ ✠ his Son our Lord, and in the virtue of the Holy ✠ Ghost; that thou mayest, by this exorcism, have power to chase away all the power of the enemy; that thou mayest be enabled to cast him out, and put him to flight with all his apostate angels, by

the virtue of the same Jesus Christ Our Lord, who is to come to judge the living and the dead and the world by fire. Amen."

Then he prays: "O God, who for the benefit of mankind hast made use of the element of water in the greatest sacraments, mercifully hear our prayers, and impart the virtue of Thy blessing ✠ to this element, prepared by many kinds of purifications, that this Thy creature, made use of in Thy mysteries, may receive the effect of Thy divine grace for chasing away devils, and curing diseases; and that whatsoever shall be sprinkled with this water in the houses or places of the faithful may be free from all uncleanness, and delivered from evil: let no pestilential spirit reside there, no infectious air: let all the snares of the hidden enemy fly away: and may whatever is opposed to the safety or the happiness of the inhabitants of that place be put to flight by the sprinkling of this water, that the welfare which we seek by the invocation of Thy holy name may be defended from assaults of every kind, through our Lord Jesus Christ, etc."

After this the priest mingles the salt with the water in the form of a triple cross, saying: "May this salt and water be mixed together,

in the name of the Father ✠ and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy ✠ Ghost. Amen."

In this portion of the ceremony the salt is typical of Jesus Christ, the Eternal Wisdom of the Father—"Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God," says St. Paul (1 Cor. i. 24), and the water signifies human nature. The mingling of the two substances, therefore, signifies the union in Christ of the human and divine natures, thus calling to our minds the great mystery of the Incarnation.

Finally the priest recites the following prayer: "O God, the Author of invincible power, King of an empire that can not be vanquished, and forever gloriously triumphant, who restrainest the force of the adversary, who defeatest the fury of the roaring enemy, who mightily conquerest his malicious wiles; we pray and beseech Thee, O Lord, with fear and humility, to regard with a favorable countenance this creature of salt and water, to enlighten it with Thy bounty, and to sanctify it with the dew of Thy fatherly goodness, that wheresoever it shall be sprinkled, all infestation of the unclean spirit may depart, and all fear of the venomous serpent may be chased away, through the invocation of Thy holy name; and that the presence of the Holy Ghost

may be everywhere with us; who seek Thy mercy through Our Lord Jesus Christ, etc."

We should, therefore, be very grateful for the privilege of keeping in our homes and using as often as we please this most precious instrument of divine grace and protection. We should keep our supply in a clean vessel and frequently renew it, so that all possible reverence and respect may be manifested in our use of it. Whatever portion of it is not in actual use should be kept in a suitable stoppered bottle, so as to exclude flies or dust from contaminating it. For the same reason it would be well to have at least in each sleeping apartment a small holy-water font of glass or china, provided with a piece of sponge to prevent its spilling or splashing. It is not necessary to use much at a time; a drop or two is quite as efficacious as a large quantity. If it is desired to sprinkle a room or a house, or a number of persons together, such as the members of a family, a little should be placed in an open vessel, and a small feather or sprig would make a convenient and suitable sprinkler. Bottles with specially made sprinkler stoppers are now easily procurable. It should be remembered that when a number are sprinkled

together it is not necessary that some of the holy water should reach each one.

Neither Easter water nor ordinary holy water should ever be used as a drink, or for any other purpose whatever except that specially intended by the Church in preparing and blessing it. Hence we should not use it with any superstitious expectation of effecting miraculous cures, as, for instance, from its application to sores or wounds of any kind. We should sprinkle our bed with it every night before retiring; and when we rise in the morning, as well as ourselves frequently during the day, as when setting out from home, in time of danger or temptation, or on any other occasion when we need the special protection of Almighty God, we should reverently and with devout and contrite heart place a little of it on our forehead with the tip of the finger, at the same time making the usual sign of the cross. To this simple act of devotion the Church attaches an indulgence of one hundred days. We might also, in order to remind ourselves of the nature, meaning, and effects of this very beautiful and simple sacramental, as well as to increase our devotion by fostering pious dispositions in our souls, repeat those

beautiful words of the Psalmist which the Church recites whenever she uses it, especially when she sprinkles the people before holy Mass on Sundays as a sign of the interior purity of mind and soul with which they should assist at this august sacrifice: "Thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; Thou shalt wash me and I shall be made whiter than snow." (Ps. l. 9.)

XXII

THE HEM OF HIS GARMENT

SACRED RELICS

"If I shall touch only his garment, I shall be healed." (Matt. ix. 21.)

WHILST nearly all the sacramentals depend for their efficacy under God upon the special prayers, blessings, and indulgences of the Church, there are some objects to which Almighty God Himself is pleased to attach a certain efficacy of impetration, or power for good, on account of their intimate connection with His chosen servants, as in the case of the wonderful effects frequently wrought by the relics of the saints and martyrs.

That everything in any way associated with the sacred humanity of our divine Master, such as portions of the true cross, objects actually touched by His sacred hands and feet, or other relics of His corporal presence on earth, is not only deserving of the greatest honor and respect from Christians as precious mementos

of our dear Redeemer, but that some wonderful virtue proceeds from them for the cure of spiritual and temporal evils, is not only what we should expect but what has frequently been miraculously manifested.

That some wonderful power for good is also attached by the special favor of Almighty God to the relics of His holy saints and martyrs is quite clear from the pages of Holy Scripture, from the teaching and practice of the Church, and from the proved experience of reliable witnesses. And this peculiar virtue is something apart from the result of what we might naturally expect to be the general effect of such upon devout souls by animating their faith and confidence and stirring up within them sentiments of love and reverence for the virtues of those with whom such lively reminders of their actual existence, virtues, and sufferings were originally so intimately associated.

When Eliseus struck the waters of the Jordan with the mantle of the holy prophet Elias, which had fallen from him when he was being miraculously taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot, "they were divided hither and thither, and Eliseus passed over." (4 Kings ii. 14.) Not very long afterward some who were en-

gaged in burying a man saw their enemies approaching and hurriedly "cast the body into the sepulcher of Eliseus. And when it had touched the bones of Eliseus, the man came to life, and stood upon his feet." (4 Kings xiii. 21.)

Special mention is also made in Holy Scripture of the wonderful healing properties which proceeded not only from the sacred person of our divine Master, on account of which "all the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him, and healed all" (Luke vi. 19), but also from His very garments. We read, for example, in the Gospel of St. Matthew that "a woman who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment. For she said within herself: If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed. But Jesus turning and seeing her, said: Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour." (Matt. ix. 20–22.)

A similar efficacy was granted by Almighty God not only to the garments but even to the very shadow of His apostles, even as He had promised when He said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, he that believeth in Me, the works

that I do, he also shall do; and greater than these shall he do" (John xiv. 12); for we read that "by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. But of the rest no man durst join himself unto them; but the people magnified them. And the multitude of men and women who believed in the Lord was more increased: Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that when Peter came, his shadow at the least might overshadow any of them, and they might be delivered from their infirmities. And there came also together to Jerusalem a multitude out of the neighboring cities, bringing sick persons, and such as were troubled with unclean spirits; who were all healed." (Acts v. 12–16.)

But, in a sense more remarkable still, as well as showing the miserable failure and exposure of the impostors who attempted to imitate such wonders, is the following: "God wrought by the hand of Paul more than common miracles. So that even there were brought from his body to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the wicked spirits went out of them. Now some also of

the Jewish exorcists who went about, attempted to invoke over them that had evil spirits, the name of the Lord Jesus, saying: I conjure you by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth. And there were certain men, seven sons of Sceva, a Jew, a chief priest, that did this. But the wicked spirit, answering, said to them: Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you? And the man in whom the wicked spirit was, leaping upon them, and mastering them both, prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. And this became known to all the Jews and the Gentiles that dwelt at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many of them that believed, came confessing and declaring their deeds." (Acts xix. 11–18.)

No doubt it was their lively remembrance of such divine manifestations that led the early Christians to collect with great risk and trouble and to preserve with affectionate and pious care the precious relics of the saints, and especially of the holy martyrs, thus fortunately preserving for the veneration and pious use and benefit of future generations of the faithful and the special glory of Holy Church those innumerable treasures of divine favor which

are so religiously preserved and so devoutly honored on her altars throughout the world at the present day; for, though it is only natural that we should honor the mortal remains of those whose lives for any reason claimed the respect of their admirers and friends, there was a very special reason for preserving with extra care the relics of the proved friends of Almighty God.

We find many examples in Holy Scripture where men of God showed the greatest respect for the bones of the dead and even for the tombs which inclosed them. Thus, for instance, when Moses was going out of the land of Egypt he took with him the remains of Joseph in order to bury them with reverence in the land of promise, according to the dying request of the holy patriarch—"And the children of Israel went up armed out of the land of Egypt. And Moses took Joseph's bones with him: because he had adjured the children of Israel, saying: God shall visit you, carry out my bones from hence with you." (Ex. xiii. 18, 19.) And the holy king Josias, though he destroyed and defiled, according to the command of God, the statues, the altars, the groves, and the sepulchers of the wicked idolaters of the Sidonians, the Moabites, and

the Ammonites, showed the greatest respect and veneration for the tomb of the prophet who had warned them, and for the sacred bones which it contained—"And as Josias turned himself, he saw there the sepulchers that were in the mount: and he sent and took the bones out of the sepulchers, and burnt them upon the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the Lord, which the man of God spoke, who had foretold these things. And he said: What is that monument which I see? And the men of that city answered: It is the sepulcher of the man of God, who came from Juda, and foretold these things which thou hast done upon the altar of Bethel. And he said: Let him alone, let no man move his bones. So his bones were left untouched with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria." (4 Kings xxiii. 16–18.)

In the beginning of Christianity, especially during the dreadful persecutions under the Roman emperors, the faithful were anxious in the first place to preserve the sacred remains of their saintly and martyred brethren from the insults of their pagan murderers, and they were also well aware of the many remarkable blessings which such precious relics secured for themselves and their households from the God

for whom those heroes had labored and suffered. Thus, as Eusebius relates, after the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, whose body had been burned, the people "gathered his bones, more precious than pearls, and more tried than gold," so that they might show due respect to such a distinguished follower of Christ, gain strength and consolation from the consideration of his happy attainment of eternal bliss, and thus be encouraged to imitate his bright example.

So also they secured the clothing, instruments of torture, bones, flesh, and even the blood of those who had died for the sake of Christ. They soaked up the blood with sponges or pieces of linen which they afterward pressed into vases and religiously preserved as priceless treasures in themselves, as well as being an earnest and a source of divine protection for themselves and their families. Such relics were generally deposited for safety in the tombs of the catacombs, or secret underground passages, and over them the holy sacrifice of the Mass was fittingly celebrated. This custom the Church had in view when she ordained that in every altar on which Mass is celebrated there must be at least a small slab of stone in which there are inclosed the relics of some

saint or martyr. The very first action of the priest when he ascends the altar is to kiss this altar-stone, as it is called, and to recite the prayer: "We beseech Thee, O Lord, by the merits of Thy saints whose relics are here, and of all the saints, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to forgive me all my sins. Amen." Thus is the prophetic vision of St. John in the Apocalypse daily and hourly literally fulfilled throughout the world: "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held" (Apoc. vi. 9), for, as St. Ambrose says: "He who suffered for all men is upon the altar: they who have been redeemed by His passion are under the altar." (Epistle xxii.)

And there are not wanting abundant proofs even in our own day of the many spiritual and temporal favors obtained by the mercy of God through the virtue of these holy relics. Before the Church canonizes any one (that is, officially declares by her infallible authority that such an one is now actually in heaven), she insists upon indisputable proof of the performance of at least three certain miracles wrought through his intercession. The many additions to the glorious calendar of the saints even in recent times are therefore proofs, if

such were required, that "the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it can not save, neither is his ear heavy that it can not hear." (Is. lix. 1.) Many miraculous cures have been effected and many wonderful conversions of most stubborn unbelievers and hardened sinners have been wrought which have been clearly shown to be due to the providence and mercy of Almighty God working His all-powerful will through the medium and for the honor of the relics of His saints and martyrs.

What sentiments of faith and piety, of awe, reverence, and devotion should fill our hearts, therefore, whenever we are privileged to gaze upon such priceless treasures and such sacred memorials of the proved friends of God! How we should rather strive to emulate the bright examples of their holy lives than expect to "see signs and wonders" (John iv. 48), as our divine Master complained to the ruler at Capharnaum. Let us, therefore, rather seek to enkindle in our souls some of the pious dispositions which led that man of faith to seek the Saviour, for, though he at first sought mere temporal blessings, he afterward received the gift of the true faith "and himself believed, and his whole house." (Ibid. iv. 53.) Let us above all implore the forgiveness of our

sins, as the priest prays at holy Mass, through the merits of the saints whose relics he kisses on the altar.

By a strange inconsistency the Church is sometimes accused by those outside her fold of paying too much attention to honoring the relics of the saints and holy martyrs and thereby detracting from the honor due to Almighty God Himself alone. But those very same people who stigmatize our practice as idolatry will go to any trouble or expense in order to secure as a cherished possession some relic or memento of a mere worldly celebrity who, though by no means perhaps a model of Christian virtue, may have enriched the world's storehouse of literature or art by some product of his genius. How often do we not hear of extravagant sums being paid, of long and tiresome journeys being undertaken, and even of crimes being committed, in order to secure a picture or a statue, the sword of the successful warrior, or even the pen of the popular author; of visits paid under great difficulties and at enormous expense to the houses where the heroes were born, the scenes of their lives and labors, or the graves where their mortal remains lie buried beneath monuments of brass or marble. It is only necessary to visit any

cemetery, pagan or Christian, to see the enormous multitude and variety and extravagance of the tombs and inscriptions that seem to be struggling with one another for pride of place in honoring the poor remains that lie beneath. Whilst Catholics honor the relics of the saints, and Almighty God has shown His special love for them, the objects of non-Catholic worship are such that "no man knows whether they are worthy of love or hatred."

But, from what we know of Catholic doctrine and practice, as well as from the knowledge of our own interior sentiments, there is no danger that Almighty God will ever be displeased by our poor imitation of His own divine example in the honor we pay to our heavenly heroes. The Christians of Smyrna, in referring to their sentiments with regard to the martyrdom of their holy bishop Polycarp, expressed the sentiments of all Catholics. "Our subtle enemy, the devil," they said, as Eusebius relates, "did his utmost that we should not take away the body, as many of us anxiously wished. It was suggested that we should desert our crucified master, and begin to worship Polycarp. Foolish men! who know not that we can never desert Christ, who died for the salvation of all men, nor worship any other.

Him we adore as the Son of God; but we show deserved respect to the martyrs, as his disciples and followers. The centurion, therefore, caused the body to be burned; we then gathered his bones, more precious than pearls, and more tried than gold, and buried them. In this place, God willing, we will meet, and celebrate with joy and gladness the birthday of His martyr, as well in memory of those who have been crowned before, as by his example to prepare and strengthen others for the combat." No, for as St. Ambrose says: "We honor the memory of that virtue which shall never die; we honor those ashes which the confession of faith has consecrated; we honor in them the seeds of eternity; we honor that body which has taught us to love the Lord and not to fear death for His sake. And why should not the faithful honor the body which even devils venerate, which they tormented indeed in death, but to which they show respect in the sepulcher? We honor, then, the body which Christ Himself has honored in the sword, and which with Him will remain in heaven." This body was indeed "the temple of the Holy Ghost" and hence the Church teaches that "the bodies of holy martyrs, and of others now living with Christ, which were the members of

Christ (1 Cor. iii. vi.), and the temple of the Holy Spirit, and which shall be raised by Him to eternal life, and be glorified, are to be venerated by the faithful." (Council of Trent, Sess. xxv.)

In order that any alleged relic of a saint or martyr should be received and venerated as such by the faithful, it is necessary that a certificate of its authenticity should be signed by a bishop and that it should be enclosed in a suitable case or reliquary sealed by the bishop himself.

XXIII

DIVERS FIGURES

PRAYERS TO THE ANGELS AND SAINTS

"And all the walls of the temple round about he carved with divers figures and carvings." (3 Kings vi. 29.)

THE doctrine of the *Communion of Saints* is an article of our holy Faith. By this we understand the intimate union that exists between the faithful on earth, the blessed in heaven, and the suffering souls in purgatory. We are all members of one mystical body whose head is Our Lord Jesus Christ, and accordingly we all mutually share in the spiritual benefits of one another, for, as St. Paul says, "if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it." (1 Cor. xii. 26.) We can, therefore, assist one another by our prayers and other good works, as members of the body of the one true Church whose head is Christ and whose body consists in its widest sense of all the children of Adam who belong to it by faith,

no matter where or in what state or condition they may be.

The members of this Church are generally divided into three classes, as follows: The first consists of all the faithful on earth and is called the *Church Militant,* because its members are still engaged in the struggle for salvation against their enemies—the world, the flesh, and the devil. The second is composed of all the faithful who, though having departed from this life in the grace and friendship of Almighty God, are not yet fit to enter into His holy presence, either because all the stains of their venial sins and imperfections have not yet been completely blotted out, or because they still owe a portion of the debt of the temporal punishment which remains due even after the guilt of sin has been remitted. These are the holy souls in purgatory who must pay what is due to the infinite justice of God even to "the last farthing" (Matt. v. 26), and hence called the *Church Suffering.* The third class is known as the *Church Triumphant,* because it consists of all who are at present actually enjoying the bliss of paradise after having valiantly conquered all the enemies of their salvation.

That the souls of the saints are actually en-

joying the happiness of heaven without having to wait for the resurrection of their bodies on the Last Day is quite clear, for many reasons. Thus, for instance, St. Paul says: "We know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven. For in this also we groan, desiring to be clothed upon with our habitation that is from heaven. Yet so that we be found clothed, not naked. For we also, who are in this tabernacle, do groan, being burthened; because we would not be unclothed, but clothed upon, that that which is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now he that maketh us for this very thing, is God, who hath given us the pledge of the Spirit. Therefore having always confidence, knowing that, while we are in the body, we are absent from the Lord. (For we walk by faith, and not by sight.) But we are confident, and have a good will to be absent rather from the body, and to be present with the Lord." (2 Cor. v. 1–8.) And again: "To me, to live is Christ: and to die is gain. And if to live in the flesh: this is to me the fruit of labor. And what I shall choose I know not. But I am straitened between two: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far

the better. But to abide still in the flesh is needful for you." (Philipp. i. 21–24.) Whilst St. John relates that he "saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb" (Apoc. vii. 9), in the actual enjoyment of the bliss of paradise.

In the next place the angels and saints know what is taking place upon earth, and take an interest in the affairs of men, at least as regards their salvation and sanctification, as is clear also from Holy Scripture. We are told, for instance, that when Dives, the rich glutton, was in hell, he asked Abraham to allow Lazarus to go to his father's house and warn his five brothers of his fate, and Abraham answered: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." (Luke xvi. 29.) Now Moses and the prophets did not appear on earth until hundreds of years after the death of Abraham, yet the latter knew all about them and that their writings contained sufficient warning and instruction for all sinners, so that it was not necessary to send a special messenger to a few. Again, our divine Master has assured us that "there shall be joy before the angels of God

upon one sinner doing penance." (Ibid. xv. 10.)

Finally, the angels and saints in heaven are both able and willing to help us by their prayers. If the unfortunate Dives even in hell so anxiously prayed to Abraham for the good of his brothers, how much more zealous will not the angels and saints in heaven be to pray for their friends upon earth who devoutly appeal to them. And it is related in Holy Scripture that the prayers of an angel who, "being zealous for Jerusalem and Sion with a great zeal," obtained mercy and help for the people of God, for " the Lord answered the angel good words, comfortable words," and promised, "My city shall yet flow with good things: and the Lord will yet comfort Sion, and He will yet choose Jerusalem." (Zach. i. 17.) And if we are told by the Holy Spirit to "pray for one another that we may be saved; for the continual prayer of a just man availeth much" (James v. 16), how much more powerful and efficacious than those of an ordinary mortal must be the prayers of those blessed spirits who have already entered into the enjoyment of the eternal reward of their justice. Hence it has been at all times the practice of the Church to keep

constantly before the minds of her children the virtues and sufferings of Jesus Christ, His holy Mother, and the saints and martyrs, in order that we might be led to admire and imitate their virtues, show them the respectful homage which is due to them, and advance daily in perfection by the grace of Almighty God obtained by their merits and intercession. "You are come to Mount Sion," says St. Paul, "and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the first-born, who are written in the heavens, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new testament." (Heb. xii. 22–24.)

To Almighty God alone belongs that supreme homage called *adoration* in the strict, technical sense. To Him alone can such honor be given. "I am the Lord thy God," He says, "Thou shalt not have strange gods before me . . . thou shalt not adore them, nor serve them." (Ex. xx. 1–5.) But there is a lesser degree of honor, or adoration, in its widest and popular sense, due to every one of God's creatures according to the office and dignity of each. To our fellow-men of every

description, without distinction of creed or class, we owe a certain amount of respect from the motive of Christian charity. Our divine Master Himself has said: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matt. xix. 19.) And our neighbor includes all mankind without any exception of persons, even those who injure us or differ from us in religion. To our superiors, both temporal and spiritual, we owe a higher degree of respect: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is just. Honor thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with a promise: That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest be long lived upon earth. And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your lords according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the simplicity of your heart, as to Christ," says St. Paul. (Eph. vi. 1–5.) And again: "Render therefore to all men their dues. Tribute, to whom tribute is due: custom, to whom custom: fear, to whom fear: honor, to whom honor." (Rom. xii. 7.) Whilst, according to the same Apostle, we should "let the priests that rule well, be es-

teemed worthy of double honor: especially those who labor in the word and doctrine." (1 Tim. v. 17.)

But to the special, proved friends of God, above all to His own most holy Mother, whom He Himself delighted to honor, we owe a still higher degree of reverence and respect. The honor we owe to the Blessed Virgin is infinitely less both in nature and in degree than what we owe to God, but nevertheless greater far and superior in kind to any that we owe to the angels and saints in heaven. To the latter in turn is due a love, respect, and veneration superior in a similar though less degree to any honor that is due to mere earthly dignitaries, however great, powerful, or deserving, for those are indeed "the spirits of the just made perfect." (Heb. xii. 23.)

Greater than all earthly heroes are those holy men and women, saints and martyrs of God, "who are come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Apoc. vii. 14.) More fitting, then, that the story of their lives, their conflicts of body and soul, and their glorious victories, should be enshrined in the hallowed pages of the Church's chronicles and

their figures portrayed on canvas or in marble for the enlightenment, edification, and encouragement of their spiritual brethren who are yet in the world, than that the portraits and statues of those who were remarkable only for their power, their wealth, or their wickedness, should be set up as false gods for the heathen worship of their foolish followers.

Catholics have been accused of idolatry, or the false worship of images, on account of the great respect they show to those of our Redeemer, His holy Mother, and the angels and saints, by those very people who are themselves more guilty of that foolish crime. Not so very many years ago the figures of Christ and His saints were torn down from our churches by such people, and the symbols and effigies of royalty were set up in their place. For the figure of the Crucified they substituted "the lion and the unicorn fighting for the crown"; and, for the statues of holy men and women, figures of dragons and devils, which led the king of the time to say to them: "You can endure lions, dragons, and devils to be figured in your churches, but will not allow the like place to patriarchs and prophets."

Every Catholic child knows that in honoring the statues of the saints we only regard the

persons they represent, and that of themselves "they have neither life nor strength nor power to hear or help us." In paying due respect to them, then, we are not depriving Almighty God of the honor that is due to Him any more than the lords of England are depriving their ruler of honor when they bow to his empty throne, raise their hats to a message from him, or preserve with superstitious care the coronation-stone or the famous woolsack on which the chancellor of the realm sits in state. Nay, rather, as the holy Council of Trent explains, "the honor which we give to images is referred to their prototypes or originals; so that by the images which we kiss, or before which we bow or uncover our heads, we adore Christ." (Sess. xxv.)

Surely a mother is not more pleased when she discovers her child kissing her photograph, or otherwise bestowing upon it signs of love and affection, than Almighty God Himself is when He sees His faithful children showing their love and reverence for Him and His dearest friends by similar salutations of the statues, figures, or portraits of His own divine Son, His holy Mother, or the saints, angels, and martyrs.

It is for this reason that our holy Mother the

Church decorates her temples and the homes of her children as far as possible with those material reminders of our absent brethren which are often more useful than either voice or pen to make us know, love, and respect their memory—the pictures, medals, and statues of Christ, Our Blessed Lady, and the saints, which are so dear to the hearts of Catholics as constant and familiar reminders of our true friends in heaven. In this she imitates as well the example of King Solomon who adorned the temple of Jerusalem according to the directions which Almighty God Himself gave to his father David. "All these things," said King David, "came to me written by the hand of the Lord that I might understand all the works of the pattern." (1 Paral. xxviii. 19). Solomon faithfully carried out these directions, and amongst the many other decorations which he completed to the honor and glory of Almighty God "all the walls of the temple round about he carved with divers figures and carvings." (3 Kings vi. 29.) Statues and pictures of our Redeemer and His saints are in this way therefore not only proper and becoming ornaments for the church, but they also help to instruct and enlighten us with regard to the eternal truths and

important teachings of our holy religion as well as to keep ever fresh in our memories by having constantly before our eyes the duty, the happiness and the reward of loving and serving God alone.

We are not forbidden, then, to make images or pictures so long as we do not fall into the foolish error of thinking that "any divinity or virtue is in them, for which they are to be honored, or that any prayer is to be made to them, or that any confidence is to be placed in them, as was formerly done by the heathens, who placed their hope in idols," as the Council of Trent teaches. If we were forbidden to make them for any other reason we could not make them at all. We could, then, never possess a picture, a statue, or a photograph of any description for any purpose whatever. And God would have broken His own commandment by directing Moses to "make two cherubims of beaten gold, on the two sides of the oracle" (Ex. xxv. 18), and to "make a brazen serpent, and set it up for a sign" that "whatsoever being struck shall look on it, shall live" (Num. xxi. 8); and by commanding King Solomon to use carved figures in the decoration of the temple, as well as by many other similar directions.

As the Church is anxious that her children should possess and venerate such material reminders of their friends in heaven, she blesses them in a special manner and frequently also attaches special indulgences to their devout use. The prayer which she recites in her blessing of a new crucifix is an indication of what we may expect from similar veneration of blessed statues, pictures, medals, or other representations of a like nature, whether a certain form of prayer is used in blessing them or merely the sign of the cross is made over them by the hand of the priest. The prayer referred to is as follows: "Bless ✠, O Lord Jesus Christ, this Thy cross, by which Thou hast redeemed the world from the power of the devil, and hast conquered by Thy passion the tempter to sin, who rejoiced in the fall of the first man by eating the forbidden fruit. [Here the priest sprinkles the Crucifix with holy water.] May this symbol of the cross be sanctified in the name of the Father ✠ and of the Son ✠ and of the Holy ✠ Ghost; that all who pray or bow before this cross for the sake of Our Lord may obtain health of body and soul. Amen."

Statues and pictures are blessed with similar devout invocations. It should be re-

membered that they are blessed and indulgenced as being representations of the persons or mysteries they are supposed to represent. Hence when they become broken or defaced so as no longer to be capable of such representation, the blessing or indulgence is no longer attached to the mere material. Such should, therefore, be respectfully destroyed, as the material, though not itself blessed, has been so intimately associated with what is holy that it is on that account not to be treated without some respect on the grounds at least of the association of ideas in connection with it.

XXIV

THE SORROWFUL WAY

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

"O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow." (Lam. i. 12.)

THERE is no devotion so well calculated to impress the heart of the Christian with so deep a sense of sorrow and shame for his sins, or to inflame his soul with so burning a love for God as devout meditation on the sacred passion of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As St. Bonaventure says, "the wounds of Jesus wound the hardest hearts and inflame the coldest souls." And so, according to St. Augustine, "the crucifix is not only the deathbed, but also the pulpit, of Christ." From this holy pulpit He preaches to us in unmistakable accents His gospel of love for the souls of men; for the love of God for men is the great secret and mystery of the passion. "Jesus," says St. John, "having loved His own

who were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John xiii. 1), and for our sakes, as St. Paul says: "emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." (Philipp ii. 7, 8.)

Hence at all times our holy mother the Church has encouraged her children to consider frequently the immense love of Jesus in His sacred passion by keeping ever before their eyes the image of His crucifix, and before their minds the story of His sufferings and death. To the devout exercise known as the Way of the Cross, or the Stations of the Cross, she has attached such numerous and extraordinary indulgences that for wise reasons she forbids preachers and authors of pious books to mention them or write about them in detail. It is enough to know, therefore, that these indulgences are so great and the conditions for gaining them so easy of fulfillment that we should be very foolish indeed not to endeavor frequently to profit by this holy exercise from which such special blessings flow to us from Almighty God, and to the performance of which so many and such great privileges are

attached by His holy Church for our help, reward, and encouragement.

When we enter a church we see hanging round the walls a series of pictures or carved figures depicting in due order the principal scenes in the last sorrowful journey of our divine Master on earth. They are placed at fairly regular intervals and generally begin on the Gospel side, which is considered the more appropriate arrangement, though no definite regulation exists, and each is surmounted by a small wooden cross which can easily be seen by the people. They are therefore forcible reminders, both collectively and individually, of that sorrowful way which was first trodden by Jesus Himself, carrying on His sacred shoulders the holy cross with which He was to redeem the world.

When Holy Simeon took the Divine Infant in his arms after His presentation in the temple, he said to Our Blessed Lady: "Behold this Child is sent for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted; and thine own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed." (Luke ii. 34, 35.) Ever afterward the thought of what

her divine Son was to suffer was ever present to her mind, for "His mother kept all these words in her heart." (Ibid. 51.) And as she followed Him at length on that last sad and sorrowful journey she saw realized to the full the truth of the prophecy, and she felt as keenly as she was perfect in mind and body and soul the sword of suffering which pierced her own heart in sympathy with the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

That last sad journey began when Pilate, through fear of the Jews, delivered up Jesus to be crucified. Our blessed Saviour had already suffered a night of agony and a sweat of blood in the garden of Gethsemani at the thought of the sufferings He was about to undergo for ungrateful men. He had been scourged at a pillar, crowned with thorns, mocked, spat upon, and shamefully abused; and now, weak and fainting though He was, He was loaded with the heavy cross and dragged and beaten along the road to Calvary. Thrice did He fall beneath its weight and thrice was He dragged up again and goaded onward by the brutal soldiers, until, at length, fearing that He would die on the road and that they would be deprived of the satisfaction of seeing Him crucified, they caused

Simon of Cyrene, whom they met on the way, to assist Him in carrying it.

During that sorrowful journey the women of Jerusalem wept and lamented for Him, for, although they belonged to the party who had cried out for His condemnation, saying: "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25), they were touched with pity when they saw the miserable state to which He had been brought. But what must have been the sentiments of His own most beloved Mother when she saw her divine Son in so pitiable a condition! She looked back in spirit over the years that had gone and saw Him as a fair, bright boy living with her and St. Joseph in their humble home at Nazareth, the very light of her life and the joy of her existence. She saw Him in His lovely manhood going about doing good, healing the sick, the blind, and the lame; consoling and comforting the sad and the sorrowful. She knew that He was the great God of heaven and earth, before whom the angels bow down in reverential awe; the Holy One of Israel, before whom "the pillars of heaven tremble, and dread at His beck" (Job xxvi. 11); and she saw Him now treated as "a worm, and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people." (Ps.

xxi. 7.) And as her eyes met those of Jesus a fresh pang of sorrow pierced her heart, for she knew that the sight of her suffering added to the agony which He was already enduring.

At last, almost exhausted, Jesus arrives at the summit of Calvary, and they prepare to crucify Him. His garments are roughly torn from His bleeding body and He is stretched upon the cross. Then the dull, sickening sound of the hammer is heard as it drives the rough nails through flesh and bone and sinew. Then the cross is raised aloft and let fall into the hole prepared for it, with a sudden shock that renews all the agony of the sacred wounds.

What a sad sight for Christians to contemplate! What a dreadful anguish must have been caused in the sacred bosom of Christ's holy Mother, as she stood in agony at the foot of that cross! Those sacred hands, whose touch cured the sick, the blind, and the lame, and raised the dead to life; that were raised to bless the little ones so dear to the Sacred Heart; that were outstretched to help the weary, to feed the hungry, and to raise the fallen; are now nailed to the disgraceful wood. Those sacred feet, that traveled the dusty roads of Judea and Galilee, as Jesus went about doing good, can now no longer move. That

sacred Heart, that loved men so much and only met with ingratitude in return, is now about to send forth its last sigh. The sweet and loving Jesus, the consoler, the comforter, the Saviour of men, the God of heaven, the joy of the angels, the delight of all the saints, is now dying a disgraceful death between two malefactors amidst the jeers and insults of the crowd.

And through all that terrible time "there stood by the cross of Jesus, His Mother" (John xix. 25). Jesus sees her there and His heart is rent in agony at the thought that she sees Him suffering. Yet from the depths of His loving Heart He freely forgives His cruel persecutors, saying: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.)

Thus He hangs for three long hours. And then, having freely offered Himself to His Eternal Father, promised the bliss of paradise to the Good Thief, and commended His holy Mother and St. John to each other's care, He "yielded up the ghost. And behold the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom: and the earth quaked and the rocks were rent. And the graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints that had

slept arose, and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection, came into the holy city, and appeared to many. Now the centurion and they that were with him watching Jesus, having seen the earthquake and the things that were done, were sore afraid, saying: Indeed this was the Son of God." (Matt. xxvii. 50–54.)

Many a time afterward did our Blessed Lady travel again over that sorrowful way and visit with indescribable emotions those sacred spots that had been hallowed by the precious blood of her divine Son. And her example was followed by the apostles, the disciples, and the holy women, who often in company went over again and again in body and reconstructed in their minds the various scenes of that awful tragedy, which spoke so eloquently to them of the infinite love of God and the base ingratitude of man.

The early Christians continued the same pious practice and came in crowds from all parts of the world to venerate the holy places. After some time those who could not actually visit in person the sacred spots so dear to them, either on account of bodily infirmity or the danger, difficulty, or entire impossibility of the journey, began to construct for their comfort

and consolation miniature representations of the Way of the Cross by setting up at various points pictures or statues of the different events or scenes in the last sad journey of our blessed Saviour to Mount Calvary. They visited each in turn and traveled in spirit with Jesus by devoutly meditating on His sacred passion.

So pious and edifying a practice the Church encouraged by every means in her power, and now it has become a world-wide devotion enriched with innumerable precious indulgences and special favors, which in general are the very same as if one should perform the actual Way of the Cross in Jerusalem itself by visiting the actual holy places themselves. These indulgences may also be applied for the benefit of the holy souls in purgatory.

The conditions attached to the gaining of these indulgences are very simple. In the first place, it must be remembered that they are attached not to the pictures, statues, or reliefs, but to the wooden crosses placed over them; and that the latter must be *canonically* erected, that is, according to the *canons* or regulations laid down by the Church, and by a priest specially privileged for the purpose. We could not, therefore, gain the indulgences by

visiting a set of the "stations" erected by ourselves in our own home, much less by using a series of the pictures such as is sometimes found in pious books.

In the next place, when performing the devotion privately in the Church or other place where the stations have been canonically erected, we must actually move from one to another, visiting each in succession and omitting none, unless such movement would be rendered impossible by reason of a great crowd or other apparent reason. Whenever the devotion is performed publicly, that is, by the priest and congregation, it is enough that the priest himself proceed from station to station and that each one answer the prayers he recites. This is the only case, too, where any vocal prayers at all are necessary, for in all other cases in which we perform the devotion all that is required is that we meditate according to our ability on Our Saviour's passion either in general or on any particular stage of it. It is not necessary to meditate on the particular subject represented in each station we visit, though such will naturally and appropriately suggest themselves as useful and edifying helps to holy thoughts and pious inspirations. Moreover, it is not necessary, as conditions pre-

scribed for the gaining of other plenary indulgences, that we should approach the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. We must, of course, be in the state of grace and have a sincere horror of sin, as we can not gain any indulgence at all unless we are at least free from the guilt of mortal sin.

Whilst from the word itself, "meditation" may seem to be a difficult matter to some, it must not be thought that any great learning is necessary or that any painful or prolonged effort is involved in it. All that we have to do is to think in our own simple way of some circumstance of the sacred passion. Thus, for instance, when we consider the meeting of our Blessed Lady and her divine Son on the road to Calvary, we must naturally be struck with the thought of what a sad and sorrowful meeting it must have been for both as their eyes met. How the stricken heart of Mary was torn with anguish when she saw Jesus suffering so much and so cruelly treated, whilst she was unable to help Him; and how the Sacred Heart of Jesus must have bled from compassion as He witnessed the terrible distress of His holy Mother. We must, then, be naturally and forcibly reminded of the fact that it was our personal sins that caused such anguish

of suffering to both innocent victims; that it was the love of Jesus for us that willingly permitted it; and that we should feel very much ashamed of and exceedingly sorry for our share in it by our ingratitude and sin. We should, then, naturally conclude never again to offend so good, so loving, and so merciful a Saviour, and be led to humbly ask His pardon for all our offenses.

In the same way, some are possessed of the idea that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to make an act of *perfect contrition* or charity; that is, to express in our minds, or form a judgment within ourselves, that we are really and sincerely sorry for having offended Almighty God, not because by sin we have lost heaven or deserved hell, or because He has been so good to us, but because God is so infinitely amiable and *good in Himself*. But we can, as it were, by the grace of God easily rise to the higher motive by the contemplation of the previously mentioned less perfect ones. A story is related, for instance, of a certain wise and good king who had to perform the painful duty of presiding over the public punishment of a criminal who had been condemned to be torn to pieces by a hungry lion in the midst of the arena in the presence of all

the people. The multitude had all assembled, the unfortunate criminal stood shivering at the fate that awaited him, and all waited with bated breath for the signal from the king at which the doors of the lion's cage were to be thrown open and the fierce and hungry beast was to be allowed to rush forth and devour the guilty wretch. The signal was given, the doors were thrown open, and there issued forth —not a fierce lion, but a gentle little lamb, which joyfully approached the poor criminal and made friends with him, licking his hands. And all the people, instinctively realizing what had occurred and the origin of it, praised and truly loved their king because he was so *good in himself* as to devise and accomplish so beautiful and touching an act of mercy, kindness, and forgiveness.

When we consider the infinite mercy and love of Jesus in His sacred passion we must be struck with the thought that we too were criminals condemned to be torn to pieces by "our adversary the devil, who, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter v. 8), but we were saved by the infinite kindness of Almighty God, who is so *good in Himself* as to send us instead His own divine Son Jesus, "the Lamb of God who

taketh away the sin of the world." (John i. 29.) In this indeed "the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour appeared" (Titus iii. 4), "blotting out the handwriting of the decree that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He hath taken the same out of the way, fastening it to the cross" (Col. ii. 14), for He "came not to destroy souls, but to save" (Luke ix. 56), to give us life and love instead of death and punishment.

Let us, then, often travel the sorrowful Way of the Cross and consider frequently the meekness, the love, the gentleness, the mercy, and the goodness of our King and our Saviour, and we shall be filled with a great horror of sin as well as with a burning love of Jesus and His holy Mother.

XXV

A WREATH OF ROSES

THE ROSARY

"It shall bud forth and blossom, and shall rejoice with joy and praise: the glory of Libanus is given to it: the beauty of Carmel and Saron, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the beauty of our God." (Is. xxxv. 1.)

JUST as our holy mother the Church wishes to keep before her children a constant and lively reminder of the sufferings and death of our divine Redeemer by the many encouragements which she offers us to practise the devotion of the Way of the Cross, so she is also anxious that we should be frequently reminded of the other principal events surrounding the sacred mystery of the Incarnation. She desires us to realize the love which brought Jesus from heaven to save us, caused Him to suffer so much for us, and brought forth such triumphant and successful results in His glorious Resurrection and Ascension.

This she accomplishes by means of the devotion so well known as the *Rosary,* which consists of a series of devout meditations on the principal events in the lives of our divine Master and His holy Mother, accompanied by the pious recital of certain prayers. These events, or *mysteries,* as they are generally called, are arranged in three separate classes or groups, according to the joyful, sorrowful, or glorious nature of the circumstances connected with them respectively. Hence this beautiful devotion has been well compared to a wreath of spiritual roses, for, as the rose consists of the leaf, the thorn and the bloom, so the Rosary consists of the Joyful Mysteries, representing the leaves; the Sorrowful Mysteries, representing the thorns; and the Glorious Mysteries, representing the blooms.

In this devotion we pass in review the lives of Jesus and Mary, and we are made familiar with their joys, sorrows, and triumphs as we live with them in spirit, speak with them in prayer, and follow them through the various scenes and events thus vividly and practically brought before us.

But not only do we contemplate these events with pious devotion, but we link them together with the most beautiful, instructive, and ex-

pressive prayers ever known, for, during the contemplation of each holy mystery we recite the Our Father once and the Hail Mary ten times. The former stands apart from all other prayers by nature of its origin, having been composed by our divine Master Himself. It is the sublimest expression of the praise and thanksgiving due to Almighty God as our eternal Father, as well as the sweetest and humblest petition for all necessaries for soul and body which the children of that loving Father can breathe into His ear. The Hail Mary is also the holy word of God Himself, for it expresses in the very language of Holy Scripture the glorious compliments which were paid to our Blessed Lady by the angel Gabriel and by her holy cousin St. Elizabeth, who said to her: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." (Luke i. 28–42.) Our holy mother the Church has added to these words of praise the sacred name of "Jesus" and the devout invocation: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen."

The Rosary, then, in its entirety consists of the devout contemplation of the various mysteries, accompanied by the pious recitation of

the Our Father once and the Hail Mary ten times during each. No other vocal prayers are necessary, but it is usual to begin with the invocation recited at the commencement of the Divine Office: "Thou, O Lord, wilt open my lips. And my tongue shall announce Thy Praise. Incline unto my aid, O God. O Lord, make haste to help me." Then "Glory be to the Father, etc.," the Apostles' Creed, and one "Our Father" and three Hail Marys in honor of the Blessed Trinity. It is also customary to say "Glory be to the Father, etc.," at the end of each decade, and to conclude the entire chaplet with the "Hail, Holy Queen" or the Litany of Loretto.

But it may be asked how we are to accomplish such an apparently complicated mental operation as to meditate with profit on the various mysteries and at the same time not only piously recite but actually keep count of such a number of repetitions of the same prayers. The matter is quite simple. One might as well ask how it is that two dear friends meeting after a long absence can perform so complex an operation as to grasp each other's hand, look into each other's face, and read in each other's eyes their inward sentiments of joy or sorrow, success or failure, sympathy or congratulation,

condolence or encouragement, at the same time as they exchange words of mutual confidence in earnest conversation, interrogating, answering, reminding, relating, and describing the results and impressions of events, persons, fortunes, and circumstances in which they are mutually concerned or interested. So it is with regard to any meditation on divine truths, but especially in the case of the Rosary.

From time immemorial it has been the custom with holy men and women whilst contemplating the infinite beauty and power and glory of their Creator and offering up to Him the homage of their praise, adoration, and thanksgiving, to recite meanwhile certain forms of prayer that are familiar to them, such as a short psalm, or hymn, the Lord's Prayer, or the Hail Mary, after the example of the angels and saints in heaven who, as St. John relates, "rest not day and night, saying: Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty." (Apoc. iv. 8.) But, as poor, weak human nature needs rest, and as the ordinary man neither could nor should spend all his time in such devout exercises to the neglect of his other duties, these holy men and women had to set certain limits to their devotions, and so arranged with themselves to recite at certain

times a certain definite number of such prayers. And in order to eliminate the distraction which would necessarily be involved in any attempt to keep the reckoning by counting in the ordinary way, they provided themselves beforehand with the requisite number of shells, beads, or small stones, which they could mechanically pass through their fingers without any extra mental effort. Thus they were able to avoid all anxiety as to when their self-imposed task would be finished, and could devote themselves entirely to the gentle contemplation of those divine truths which they made their life's study, being meanwhile refreshed by the graces and inspirations which their ardent sighs and prayers obtained for them.

So it is with the Rosary. We provide ourselves with a string of beads, consisting generally of five sets or "decades," each consisting of one large bead and ten smaller ones, representing one Our Father and ten Hail Marys respectively. Thus the mere counting of the prayers is but an almost unconscious mechanical operation which, instead of distracting the mind, rather helps to concentrate our thoughts on what we are engaged in and fixes a definite period for our meditation. Hence the very fingering of the beads is even from a human

point of view a very soothing help to our thoughts and prayers, especially when we have grown to know and love our Rosary as we ought.

Our meditations need not be a very elaborate or complex train of thought, but a sweet and gentle contemplation of the various scenes and circumstances surrounding the different mysteries as they are brought before us and the pious thoughts and desires, affections, resolutions, and petitions suggested by them. Now and then we may allow our mind to dwell upon some or all of the words of the Our Father or the Hail Mary, as we feel inclined, or on the holy names of Jesus and Mary as we pronounce them; but it is not necessary to attend to all the words in detail. With what pleasure and with what ease and contentment do we not listen in this way to a favorite song, sung by a sweet singer to the accompaniment of sweet music. Neither the words, nor the music, nor the sentiments evoked in us confuse or spoil the general effect. So, too, whilst reciting the Rosary we may also allow our mind to dwell at times in a general way on the special intention for which we may be offering it, on our desire to do all that Almighty God expects us to do, on the sincere wish which we possess to

obtain His grace and love, and to honor Jesus and His holy Mother by our Rosary. Thus gently and without anxiety or perturbation of spirit, without dullness or weariness, we shall pass lightly from thought to thought, from prayer to prayer, gathering honey from the flowers, and be refreshed by the sweet odor of the roses which we offer to Mary, whilst at the same time she will intercede with her divine Son on our behalf and obtain for us many special favors.

In this way the recitation of the Rosary becomes a pleasure and not a task, as some make it. It is a devotion suitable alike to young and old, to the scholar and to the so-called ignorant, for he who loves the Rosary can not be ignorant, because it is a book in which true knowledge may be found by all—the knowledge of Jesus and Mary, the science of the saints, the familiar intercourse with Almighty God which will enlighten the mind and sanctify the soul.

The spread of the Rosary in its present form is due to our Blessed Lady herself, who revealed to St. Dominic, at a time when he was much concerned about the conversion of a band of blasphemous and cruel heretics who were devastating the south of France, its wonderful

power for dispelling the wickedness of the devil, destroying heresy and sin, and promoting the glory of God and the sanctification of souls. She told him to preach the devotion of the Rosary and he would be successful in converting sinners and leading many souls to God. There is no need to relate the wonderful success which attended his efforts, for it was truly miraculous. Ever since, the wonderful power of the Rosary has been proved again and again, both publicly and privately, by the numerous temporal as well as spiritual victories which have been won through its means. A special festival was instituted in honor of the devotion by Pope Pius V in thanksgiving for the miraculous victory of the Christians over the Turks at the battle of Lepanto in the year 1571, obtained by the help of our Blessed Lady through the Rosary. To the same cause the Church assigns the defeat of the Turks at Belgrade in 1716, by which all Christendom was saved from untold horrors.

And none the less wonderful because known only to God are the results both spiritual and temporal which are being daily accomplished in the lives of those who are in these days devoted to this wonderful means of victory over their enemies. How many saints the Rosary

has raised from the death of sin to the life of grace; how many miracles it has wrought; what help, relief, strength, and consolation it has brought into the hearts and souls of those who were in distress and danger, in doubt or perplexity, only God and His holy Mother know. Where the family Rosary is regularly recited, the blessings and graces of heaven flow in rich abundance. Next to the holy sacrifice of the Mass itself, the Rosary has been instrumental in gaining for the "Island of Saints and Scholars" her glorious and well-merited title, for there it is recited every evening by every good Catholic family assembled in every household. It kept the Faith alive in the sons and daughters of Erin when their churches were burned down and their priests driven from them, and preserved the honor of their womanhood when nothing but the protection of heaven could save it.

In order to encourage the spread of this beautiful and most useful devotion our holy mother the Church has enriched it with many precious blessings and indulgences. Of these there are three principal divisions or classes, according to the nature and privileges of the blessing attached to the beads and the manner of using them. The first is known as the or-

dinary *papal* or *apostolic blessing,* which is attached to the beads as to a *blessed object* by the Sovereign Pontiff himself or by a priest having the necessary powers bestowed on him, by the simple sign of the cross without any form of words or the use of holy water. In order to gain the indulgences attached to this blessing it is necessary that the owner of the beads have them in his actual keeping, either in his hands, on his person, or at least in his presence, so that the prayers may be recited before them. Some of the indulgences also are attached to the mere devout possession of such, so that, apart altogether from the recitation of the Rosary on them, they are true sacramentals.

The *Dominican blessing* is conferred only by the Religious of the Order of St. Dominic with a special form of blessing, and the beads are sprinkled with holy water as part of the ceremony. The following is the actual prayer recited for this particular blessing, and it gives us an idea of the general good effects to be hoped for from the use of indulgenced beads generally: "O Almighty and merciful God, who, out of the surpassing love which Thou hast bestowed upon us, didst will, in order to deliver us from the power of the devil, that

Thine only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, should come down upon earth, and at the message of an angel take flesh from the most sacred womb of Our Lady, Blessed Mary, and undergo the death of the cross, and the third day rise gloriously from the dead; we implore Thy unbounded mercy that Thou wouldst bless ✠ and sanctify ✠ these beads, dedicated by Thy faithful Church to the honor and praise of the same Mother of Thy Son, and wouldst so abundantly pour forth upon them the power of the Holy Ghost that whosoever shall carry them, and shall reverently keep them in his house, and shall devoutly pray to Thee, dwelling on the divine mysteries, according to the rules of this holy Society, may abound in true and lasting piety, and may share and partake in all the graces, privileges, and indulgences which have been granted to the same Society by the Holy Apostolic See; and may always and everywhere be kept safe from every foe, visible and invisible, in this present world, and may finally at the hour of death, full of all good works, be found worthy to be presented unto Thee by the same Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Through the same Lord Jesus Christ, etc."

To gain these indulgences it is necessary to

meditate as well as we can on the several mysteries arranged in order, not merely on any event we might select ourselves. When, however, the Rosary is said in common by a number of persons together, it is enough if one of the persons possess and use for the purpose beads with this blessing attached, in order that all may gain the indulgence. If one can not meditate at all, then the mere devout recital is sufficient.

The *Bridgettine blessing,* so called because St. Bridget was instrumental in spreading the devotion in honor of the years of our Blessed Lady's life upon earth, is attached by the mere sign of the cross, without prayer or holy water, by a priest privileged for the purpose. In order to gain the indulgences, meditation on the mysteries is not necessary.

All these and the accompanying indulgences may be attached to the same set of beads, and may be all gained by the same person for whom the beads are blessed, as often as he fulfills the necessary conditions.

It must be remembered that beads are blessed and indulgenced for the one person alone, so that if they are lost by him and found by another the blessing and indulgence are not transferred to the finder. If one should lend

his beads to another with the intention of enabling him to gain the indulgence, the blessing and indulgences attached are lost to both, and the beads must be blessed again. But if they are lent merely to count the prayers, there is nothing lost to the lender and nothing gained by the borrower, from the indulgences. The blessing and indulgences are attached to the beads themselves, and not to the wire or chain on which they are strung. Hence they may be restrung if necessary, and even if some of the beads be missing new ones may be supplied in their place, the complete set retaining all blessings and indulgences. Moreover, it is not necessary that the beads be restrung in the exact order of the original arrangement.

Let us, then, be devout in our recitation of the Rosary and never allow a day to pass without reciting at least five of the mysteries. Practice will make us perfect, and knowledge derived from such practice will make us love the devotion. Then it will be a pleasure as well as a help and a consolation, and each day we can offer to our Blessed Lady "A Wreath of Roses" with which she will be very pleased, and for which she will reward us by her special care and protection.

XXVI

THE QUEEN'S UNIFORM

THE SCAPULAR

"Arise, arise, put on thy strength, O Sion, put on the garments of thy glory, O Jerusalem, the city of the Holy One." (Is. lii. 1.)

EARTHLY kings and queens honor their deserving subjects by enrolling them in special orders or companies, membership of which carries with it certain privileges and the right to wear a distinctive badge, dress or uniform, by means of which the right to enjoy them is indicated and in a sense secured. In the same way our Blessed Lady has instituted special companies of her faithful children on earth, by becoming members of which they become possessed of many special privileges, are made the recipients of many wonderful favors from their beloved Queen, and are allowed to wear her uniform as an earnest of their peculiar and important rights and duties.

On July 16, in the year 1251, St. Simon

Stock, of the Religious Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, was favored by a vision of the Queen of Heaven in which our Blessed Lady appeared to him holding in her hands the well-known *Brown Scapular.* She told the saint to receive this scapular of his Order and assured him that it was the special badge of her favor which she had obtained for him and for the children of Mount Carmel; that he who died clothed with it should be preserved from eternal fire: that it was the token of salvation, the pledge of her powerful protection in danger, and an earnest of her special friendship.

The Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel traces its origin back to the time of the prophet Elias, more than eight hundred years before the time of Christ's coming. When Our Blessed Saviour came upon earth, the followers of Elias became Christians and were in a very special manner devoted to the service of our Blessed Lady, in whose honor they erected a church on Mount Carmel.

So assured were several successive Popes of the truth of the vision of St. Simon Stock, and so certain were they of the value of such wonderful promises as were revealed to him in so remarkable a manner, that they encouraged the

faithful by every possible means to join the Confraternity of Our Lady of Mount Carmel and wear her scapular, especially by attaching many and rich indulgences, both plenary and partial, to various prayers and other good works to be performed by the members, and by admitting them to a share in the spiritual fruits of all the good works not only of the Religious Order of Carmelites but of all Religious Orders throughout the world and of Christendom in general.

In addition to those promises which our Blessed Lady made to St. Simon Stock she also promised, in a special revelation made to Pope John XXII, the extraordinary privilege of soon releasing from purgatory, especially on the first Saturday after their death, the members of this confraternity who should not only have been faithful members and have worn her scapular constantly during life, but who should also have fulfilled certain other very special conditions.

As these privileges are so remarkable, so varied, and so distinct from all other known privileges, it will be necessary for us to know in general the nature of the favors we may obtain and the exact conditions necessary for sharing in them, lest any superstitious belief in

the mere act of being enrolled in the confraternity and wearing the scapular as merely nominal members, without any attempt at true holiness of life and sincere devotion to our Queen should lead sinners to abuse the mercy of God and expect to be saved in spite of themselves on the false assumption that our Blessed Lady promised her favor and special protection to such. Nay, they will rather merit the punishment that is due to a base deserter who continues to wear the uniform of his friends whilst he is actually serving in the ranks of the enemy. Such a false and wicked assumption is indeed blasphemy and deserves of itself eternal death.

In the first place, we must be enrolled as valid members and obtain the privilege of wearing the scapular from a priest duly authorized to confer it. In order to secure this we should apply to any of the priests of our parish, who will probably themselves possess all the necessary powers, or, if not, who will give us all the requisite information. We should present ourselves for enrollment with a pair of scapulars to be blessed and used for our investment.

The word *scapular* is derived from a Latin word which means the *shoulders,* and the gar-

ment is so called because it is worn over the shoulders, being a long and wide strip of cloth with an opening for the head, extending in front and at the back almost to the ground. The Brown Scapular of the laity is a miniature reproduction of that worn by the members of the Religious Order of Our Lady of Mount Carmel. It consists essentially of two small rectangular pieces of brown woolen cloth joined together by two strings of any material or color. The scapular itself must therefore not be of silk, satin, cotton, or any other material but *wool*. It must, moreover, be of *woven*, not knitted, wool. It must be worn over the shoulders in such a way that one piece hangs upon the breast and the other on the back. It is not necessary that it should be worn next the body, but may be worn under or over any portion of the ordinary clothing. The members of Religious Orders generally wear the scapular proper to their Order outside their ordinary habit. It would not do, therefore, to wear the pieces tied together round the neck, or to carry them in the pocket. It is permitted to ornament or decorate the scapular with appropriate designs in any color, provided the *brown* predominates and the original form and appearance are generally

preserved. It is necessary to note these requirements, because whenever a certain uniform is designed and prescribed in detail by the proper authority in any organization, as the distinctive dress of its members, it is surely not lawful for any individual member to change at his own pleasure its entire form and appearance by substituting another of his own invention. Hence all rights and privileges of membership are suspended if we do not obey the directions laid down and observe the requirements exactly.

Whilst recently by special privilege of our Holy Father Pope Pius X the Scapular Medal may be used as a substitute for the ordinary scapular strictly so called, we must remember that the latter is still necessary for our enrollment and investment, and we can not be validly admitted as a member of the Confraternity unless the priest who invests us actually places it on our shoulders.

When the scapular with which we have been invested becomes worn, soiled, or lost, all that is needed is to procure a new one and put it on without further ceremony, or we may use even from the very beginning, immediately after our investment, the present substitute of the Scapular Medal. Disused or worn scapu-

lars should be respectfully destroyed by burning them. If we neglect to wear the scapular or to carry the Medal for a considerable time we lose meanwhile all the privileges of membership, but on resuming one or the other we regain the right to share in them. Whatever happens it is not necessary, however, to be enrolled or invested over again, provided we have been validly admitted to membership in the beginning.

By wearing the scapular and leading a good Christian life we enjoy all the general privileges of membership and may gain all the indulgences attached to such on the usual conditions. Thus, for instance, we are entitled to a plenary indulgence on the day of enrollment on the usual conditions of confession and holy communion and prayer for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff, as well as at the hour of death, on the feast of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and on many other occasions. Moreover, whenever by the kindness and charity of our friends the holy sacrifice of the Mass is offered up for the repose of our souls after our death the priest who celebrates the Mass for our special benefit obtains for us the particular favor of a *privileged altar,* which means that a plenary indulgence is thereby placed to our

credit, as it were, for the relief of our soul from purgatory. It must be remembered that all indulgences offered in favor of the souls of the faithful departed can be applied only by way of impetration and not therefore directly, as when we gain them for ourselves.

The special conditions necessary for those members who wish to obtain in addition the extraordinary favor known as that of the *Sabbatine Privilege,* by which deliverance from purgatory through our Blessed Lady's intercession is obtained on the first Saturday after death, are that we wear during life the Brown Scapular, observe holy chastity according to our state of life (as married or single) and also either recite daily the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin or abstain from flesh meat every Wednesday and Saturday, as well as observe the usual days of fast and abstinence prescribed for the faithful in general. It is only for this very special privilege alone, then, that any special prayers are prescribed, and there is therefore no obligation to recite any in order to gain the general favors due to membership of the confraternity. But the devout client of Mary will surely not neglect to pay his respects frequently to that Holy Queen to whose company he belongs and whose uniform

he is entitled to wear. He will often make her the object of his pious thoughts and will constantly endeavor to imitate her virtues and to ask her protection. He will use every means in his power to spread devotion to her and show by his faithful attention to her wishes and to the commands of her divine Son that he is a loyal soldier of Christ and a faithful guardian of the honor of The Queen's Uniform.

As an example of the favors we may expect from the devout reception and wearing of this holy habit the following prayers and formula used by the priest, at the reception, are instructive: "Receive this blessed habit; praying the most holy Virgin that by her merits thou mayest wear it without stain; and that she may guard thee from all evil, and bring thee to life everlasting . . . By the power granted me, I admit thee to the participation of all the spiritual good works, which through the gracious help of Jesus Christ are performed by the Religious of Mount Carmel . . . May the Creator of heaven and earth, Almighty God, bless ✠ thee; who hath deigned to unite thee to the confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel. We beseech her, in the hour of thy death, to crush the head of the old serpent; so that thou mayest in the end win

the everlasting palm and crown of the heavenly inheritance. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Besides the Brown Scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel there is also the *Blue Scapular* of the Immaculate Conception. This scapular owes its origin to a vision of Our Lady vouchsafed to a holy nun named Ursula Benincasa. The Blessed Virgin appeared to her on Candlemas Day, the feast of the Purification, clothed in a white robe of extraordinary brightness and a blue cloak or mantle, carrying the Infant Jesus in her arms. She was accompanied by a band of virgins similarly attired. And she commanded the saint to found the Order of the Immaculate Conception. She expressed her desire also that all the faithful should share in the privileges of this Order who should wear the blue scapular of the Immaculate Conception in honor of that holy mystery and faithfully discharge the duties of their respective states of life.

According to St. Alphonsus Liguori, "besides many particular indulgences, there are annexed to the Scapular of the Immaculate Conception all the indulgences which are granted to any Religious Order, pious place, or person. And particularly by reciting the Our

Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be to the Father six times, in honor of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Immaculate Mary, are gained each time, all the indulgences of Rome, Portiuncula, Jerusalem, Galicia, which reach the number of four hundred and thirty-three plenary indulgences, besides the temporal, which are innumerable."

A third scapular in honor of our Blessed Lady is known as the *Black Scapular* of Our Lady of Dolors. This owes its origin to seven pious noblemen of Florence who were very devoted to the service and praise of Our Lady. They were favored by two visions. The first occurred on the feast of the Assumption whilst they were all engaged in prayer in honor of that holy mystery. They saw a globe of fire with seven brilliant rays proceeding from it. Our Lady then appeared, accompanied by angels, and commanded them to leave the world and retire into the desert. This they did and devoted themselves especially to meditation on the sufferings of Jesus and Mary in the sacred passion of Our Saviour. As they were engaged in this holy exercise on Good Friday evening, the second vision took place. On this occasion the Blessed Virgin appeared, accompanied by a multitude of angels bearing with

them the instruments of the sacred passion, and a branch of palm as the sign of victory; also a shield on which was written the words *Servants of Mary*, the title by which the holy men were known. Our Lady then presented to them a black habit and promised them the palm of victory if they persevered as they had begun in honoring her divine Son and herself in her dolors. In order to allow the faithful in general to participate in the promised reward and to encourage devotion to Our Lady of Dolors the Church at length approved of the Black Scapular in its present form and extended to all who should devoutly wear it the privileges of the Order of the Servants of the Mother of God.

The special devotion instituted by its founders in connection with the Black Scapular is the Rosary of the Seven Dolors of the Blessed Virgin. This consists of devout meditation on each dolor whilst one Our Father and seven Hail Marys are recited in honor of each. Three Hail Marys are said at the end in honor of the tears shed by Our Lady of Sorrows in her dolors, to obtain the grace of true contrition and the indulgences attached to the performance of the devotion. The Seven Dolors are as follows: the Prophecy of Simeon, the Flight

into Egypt, the Loss of the Child Jesus, the Meeting of Jesus with the Cross, the Crucifixion, the Piercing of Jesus with the Lance, and the Burial of Jesus.

In honor of the Sacred Passion itself there is also a scapular approved by the Church. It is known as the *Red Scapular* of the Passion, and owes its origin to a vision of our blessed Saviour, vouchsafed to a Sister of Charity whilst she was praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord showed her the Red Scapular. On one part was represented the crucifixion, with the instruments of the sacred passion, on the other the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary with a cross raised between them. On the first part were the words, "Holy Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, save me," and in the other were the words, "Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, protect us."

The Scapular of the Most Holy Trinity is likewise due to a supernatural vision. During the celebration of his first Mass a holy priest of Paris named John de Matha saw an angel in a white robe with a cross of red and blue on the breast, holding his hands over a Moor and a Christian. On account of this the holy man devoted his life to the redemption of Christian

captives who were suffering greatly at the hands of the pagan Moors. Meanwhile, he was favored by another vision, in which he saw a snow-white stag with a blue and red cross between its horns. He founded a new Order with the approval of the Pope, who also witnessed during Mass a vision similar to that which St. John had seen at Paris. The Scapular of the Order of the Most Holy Trinity is *white,* with a red and blue cross in the center.

Let us, then, endeavor to obtain a large share in all these wonderful privileges by devoutly wearing some or all of the Scapulars. They may all be attached to one string, but if the Red Scapular of the Passion is included, the string must be red. No special color is prescribed for the others.

How happy are they who, after a life spent in the loving service of their Queen, die wearing her uniform. No other passport is necessary for admission into her kingdom and court, for the angels themselves will recognize her trusty soldiers and will conduct them to her throne to be presented to the King and to live with Him forever.

XXVII

THE MASTER'S VOICE

CHURCH BELLS

"A voice from the temple, the voice of the Lord." (Is. lxvi. 6.)

ALMIGHTY God speaks to His children in a variety of ways. Every wind that blows, every blade of grass that grows, every shower of rain that falls tells us of His wonderful providence. Earth, air, sea, and sky proclaim His glory. As St. Paul says: "The invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made; His eternal power also, and His divinity." (Rom. i. 20.)

The Jews heard the voice of God amidst the thunders around Mount Sinai, and they became so much afraid that they said to Moses: "Speak thou to us, and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die." (Ex. xx. 19.) But to us Almighty God speaks in the tender accents of a loving Father, with the

gentle voice of the shepherd calling his flock. Hence St. Paul reminds us: "You are not come to a mountain that might be touched, and a burning fire, and a whirlwind, and darkness, and storm, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which they that heard excused themselves, that the word might not be spoken to them: for they did not endure that which was said: And if so much as a beast shall touch the mount, it shall be stoned. And so terrible was that which was seen, Moses said: I am frighted, and tremble. But you are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels, and to the church of the firstborn, who are written in the heavens, and to the spirits of the just made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Testament, and to the sprinkling of blood which speaketh better than that of Abel. See that you refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke upon earth, much more shall not we, that turn away from Him that speaketh to us from heaven." (Heb. xii. 18–25.)

Our holy mother the Church, imitating the spirit of love and gentleness of our divine Master, calls us to her holy temple on Mount

Sion, not with commanding blast of trumpet but with the musical, appealing tones of her holy bells. What joy and consolation does not this "Voice of God" afford to the devout Catholic as it lovingly invites him to his Father's house, where a banquet of delights is already prepared for him! What holy sentiments of love and gratitude and pleasant anticipation it stirs up within his breast! Even when on his bed of sickness he can not answer its glad invitation, what peace and comfort it affords him; for it tells him that he is not forgotten, and he is thereby reminded to unite in prayer and holy thanksgiving with his more fortunate brethren who are able to sit at the Master's Table and listen to His voice speaking words of heavenly wisdom! "For we have not by following artificial fables," says St. Peter, "made known to you the powers, and presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ; but we were eyewitnesses of His greatness. For He received from God the Father, honor and glory: this voice coming down to Him from the excellent glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him. And this voice we heard brought from heaven, when we were with Him in the holy mount. And we have the more firm prophetic word: whereunto

you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Understanding this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation. For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter i. 16–21.)

Like everything which she uses in the service of Almighty God, the Church blesses, or "christens," as it is sometimes called, and in this instance in an unusually impressive and solemn manner, the bell with which she invites her children to sacrifice and prayer. The bishop and clergy having assembled round the bell placed in the middle of the church, various psalms are recited, asking God for His mercy and help and promising to adore and serve Him faithfully. Then holy water is blessed in the usual manner, with the addition of a special prayer for the particular purpose for which it is being prepared. Then the bishop and clergy wash the interior and exterior of the bell whilst further psalms are being recited expressive of praise and thanksgiving to Almighty God and trust in Him alone, joined with the hope that He will be specially glorified in His Church—"Sing ye to the Lord a new

canticle: let His praise be in the church of His saints. Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him: and let the children of Sion be joyful in their king." (Ps. cxlix.) "Praise ye the Lord in His holy places: praise ye Him in the firmament of His power. Praise ye Him for His mighty acts: praise ye Him according to the multitude of His greatness. Praise Him with sound of trumpet: praise Him with psaltery and harp. Praise Him with timbrel and choir: praise Him with strings and organs. Praise Him on high sounding cymbals: praise Him on cymbals of joy: let every spirit praise the Lord. Alleluia." (Ps. cl.)

Then the bishop recites a most beautiful prayer in which he asks God that when the bell sounds it may kindle in the hearts of the faithful true love and devotion for His holy service; that the disturbance of the elements may be calmed and the atmosphere rendered free from all dangers of disease and evil spirits. After which a psalm is recited inviting all to praise and glorify Almighty God, and commemorating His mighty works—"Adore ye the Lord in His holy court. The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of majesty hath thundered, the Lord is upon many waters. The voice of the Lord is in power; the voice of

the Lord in magnificence. The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars: yea, the Lord shall break the cedars of Libanus. And shall reduce them to pieces, as a calf of Libanus, and as the beloved son of unicorns. The voice of the Lord divideth the flame of fire: the voice of the Lord shaketh the desert: and the Lord shall shake the desert of Cades. The voice of the Lord prepareth the stags: and He will discover the thick woods: and in His temple all shall speak His glory. The Lord maketh the flood to dwell: and the Lord shall sit king forever. The Lord will give strength to His people: the Lord will bless His people with peace." (Ps. xxviii.)

The bishop now anoints the bell with holy *Oil of the Sick* making the sign of the cross with it seven times on the exterior and four times on the interior, at the same time praying that God may consecrate and sanctify it within and without, and make the sound of it fruitful of grace, blessing and protection for all the faithful. A Gospel is then read which describes the visit of our divine Master to Martha and Mary, and relates the answer made by Him to the former when she complained that Mary was not helping her in the preparation of the meal but was occupied instead "sitting

at the Lord's feet, hearing His word" (Luke x. 39)—"Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things: But one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her." (41, 42.) Which proves how pleasing to our divine Master is the soul which listens to His voice, and in holy prayer and meditation attends to the divine inspirations when God "speaks to her heart." (Osee ii. 14.)

The church bell is then indeed for us the Master's Voice. It calls us to rejoice in times of happiness, to mourn in times of sorrow, to seek consolation and direction in times of distress and danger, and to adore our Creator and Redeemer in His house on the holy mount. With what varying emotions do we not listen to the joy-bells of Christmas announcing to us the birth of Our Saviour, the glad, triumphant tones of the Easter bells declaring His glorious resurrection, the sad and solemn sound of the funeral bell telling us of the passing of another soul into eternity, and reminding us that we also must pass the same way. What a distinctive, homely, heavenly sound is that of the bell which invites us to holy Mass, or of the Angelus bell with its peaceful, soothing tones so regularly and so frequently reminding us

of the great mystery of the Incarnation and inviting us to bow down both soul and body to adore the Word made flesh and to implore the protection and assistance of Jesus and His holy Mother!

The *Angelus,* so called from the first word of the Latin version, is a regular, though brief, history of the events leading up to and surrounding the great mystery of the Incarnation; and the ringing of the bell in the morning, at noon and in the evening invites us to consider the wonderful story, so that we may be frequently reminded of the presence of God and of His infinite love for the souls of men. What sweet simplicity characterizes the language of the stupendous announcement: "The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary. And she conceived of the Holy Ghost. Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done unto me according to Thy word. And the Word was made flesh. And dwelt amongst us"! Thrice the Hail Mary is repeated with a humble acknowledgment of our sins and a fervent appeal for special help at that time when we need it most, "at the hour of our death." The prayer concludes with the versicle and response: "Pray for us, O holy Mother of God. That we may be made

worthy of the promises of Christ," and the invocation: "Pour forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ was made known by the message of an angel, may by His passion and cross be brought to the glory of His resurrection, through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

To the devout recitation of this beautiful prayer is attached an indulgence of one hundred days each time, and for its recitation morning, noon, and evening at the sound of the bell, a plenary indulgence once a month in addition. It should be recited on bended knees except from Saturday evening to Sunday evening, both inclusive, when it is said standing in honor of the Resurrection of Our Saviour. If we can not hear the bell, or if for any reason we can not kneel, we may say it about the time the bell should be rung, and in any other respectful position. For those who do not know it by heart and who can not read, the same indulgence may be gained by the devout recital of five Hail Marys. Whenever we recite the prayer from memory, as is generally the case, we should be very careful to have the correct rendering. Let us, then, refresh our memories from time to time by carefully read-

ing it in our prayer-book, as there is danger of irreverence if through constant use we carelessly fall into a corrupted version of this or any other prayer.

Instead of the Angelus it is customary to recite the paschal hymn to the Blessed Virgin from the evening of Holy Saturday to Trinity Sunday. This custom was introduced as an act of thanksgiving to the holy Mother of God for miraculously putting an end to a dreadful plague which was causing terrible ravages in Rome in the sixth century. The Pope, St. Gregory, was taking part in a procession which he had organized in order to implore the assistance of Almighty God in that great disaster. He carried a picture of the Blessed Virgin in his hands, and as the procession was passing to the church of St. Peter's, voices were heard in the air singing this hymn. The Pope and people joined in answering each verse with the words: "Pray to God for us. Alleluia." Then an angel was seen placing a sword in its scabbard, and the plague ceased. If we do not know the words of this beautiful hymn we may gain the indulgences by the recitation of the Angelus as usual, but we should always endeavor like dutiful children to carry out in all their details the wishes of

our holy mother the Church. The hymn is said standing, and the following approved translation may be used: "O Queen of heaven, rejoice, Alleluia. For He whom thou didst deserve to bear, Alleluia. Hath arisen, as He said, Alleluia. Pray for us to God, Alleluia. *V.* Rejoice and be glad, O Virgin Mary, Alleluia. *R.* For the Lord hath truly risen. Alleluia. Let us Pray. O God, who through the resurrection of Thy Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, hast vouchsafed to give joy to the world: grant, we beseech Thee, that through His Mother, the Virgin Mary, we may obtain the joys of eternal life. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

The smaller bells used in the church are not blessed. They are, as a rule, used simply for the purpose of signifying to the faithful that a certain portion of the holy sacrifice of the Mass is proceeding. Usually the bell is rung thrice at the Sanctus, once toward the end of the Canon, thrice at the Elevation of the Sacred Host and Chalice respectively, and thrice at the Communion. A small bell is also rung continuously to give notice to the people whenever the Blessed Sacrament is being carried past in solemn procession.

At the same time, even these smaller bells

are occasionally used in order to indicate the general spirit of the Church during certain seasons. Thus, for instance, they are rung as a sign of joy at the Gloria in the Mass on Holy Thursday. They are silent from that time until Easter Saturday, when their voice is once more heard in joyful and exultant tones and all the bells of the church are rung continuously during the recitation of the Gloria by the celebrant in honor of the glorious resurrection of our blessed Saviour.

Various symbolical reasons are assigned for this custom. According to some, the bells typify the preachers of the word of God, "The Master's Voice"; and as the preaching of the Gospel was interrupted from the time that Our Lord was taken prisoner until He rose from the dead, the silence of the bells during this period is commemorative of those events. According to others, their silence signifies the loneliness of Christ during His sacred passion, when He was abandoned even by the apostles, as well as being indicative of the sad circumstances of the time generally.

For the same reason the organ is silent during the same period and is never used at any time in Masses of Requiem for the dead. Hence the organ is symbolical of joy, although

in Church music generally it is to be regarded as assisting rather than dominating the choir. Hence there should be no attempt to introduce, especially during holy Mass, such elements as organ or other instrumental solos, or even vocal solos, particularly when sung by females. Neither should there be any admixture of secular and unbecoming additions or corruptions made in the rendering of the recognized chants, hymns, psalms, or Masses. Such attempts are always opposed to the mind of the Church and to her positive legislation on the matter.

There is no music so truly beautiful and elevating in the circumstances as the simple and majestic authorized music of the Church herself. Even the greatest composers, such as Haydn and Mozart, were charmed by them, and were sometimes so profoundly moved as to shed tears whilst they listened to them. It is the ardent desire of our holy mother the Church that the people should sing together the praises of God; and certainly congregational singing is far more devotional, even if less perfectly rendered, than some of the vain, florid, and irreverent operatic music one is sometimes distracted by and which is so inappropriate to the place, purpose, and circumstances of public worship. Let all then join

in the singing of the hymns at the meetings of the confraternity and let as many as possible endeavor to assist the regular choir by offering their services and by regularly attending the practices with the pure intention of pleasing, praising, and adoring Almighty God. By such loving service we join with the blessed spirits in heaven in their uninterrupted canticles of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving, and thus "exalt the Lord our God, and adore at His holy mountain." (Ps. clviii.) "A voice of the people from the city, a voice from the temple, the voice of the Lord." (Is. lxvi. 6.)

XXVIII

SHOWERS OF BLESSING

BLESSED ARTICLES

"And I will make them a blessing round about My hill: and I will send down the rain in its season, there shall be showers of blessing." (Ezech. xxxiv. 26.)

THERE is no exception to the material gifts of nature which our holy mother the Church "sanctifies by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. iv. 5). And every child of God has, in a sense the power to bless, for a blessing is essentially a prayer. Hence we find that holy men and women of all ages could pay no greater compliment to any one or confer a greater favor on him than by devoutly blessing him; that is, by asking Almighty God to grant him some special mark of favor. This they may do either implicitly, by the general expression of some sentiment of good will toward the person; or explicitly, by directly appealing to Almighty God by some prayer

expressed in words or actions. Thus Isaac blessed Jacob "in the sight of the Lord" (Gen. xxvii. 7); Jacob blessed his sons, "every one with their proper blessings" (Ibid. xlix. 28); Moses and Aaron blessed the people (Lev. ix. 23); "the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell in Jerusalem" (Nehem. xi. 2); Holy Simeon blessed the Divine Infant and His holy Mother (Luke ii. 34); and Jesus blessed little children, "embracing them, and laying His hands upon them." (Mark x. 16.)

Hence a blessing may be invoked by any one; but as it is a prayer its efficacy depends upon the office, spiritual dignity, or personal sanctity of the one who blesses. Thus the official blessings even of the priests of the Old Law were more valuable, other essentials being supposed to be equal, than those of the ordinary people, as St. Paul explains when showing the greatness and dignity of the priesthood of Melchisedech from the fact that the latter officially blessed the holy patriarch Abraham, for "he whose pedigree is not numbered among them, received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. And without all contradiction, that which is less is blessed by the better." (Heb. viii. 6, 7.) So, for instance, a

parent's blessing has its own peculiar efficacy. But as "the continual prayer of a just man availeth much" (James v. 16), the blessings of private individuals can not be compared with the official blessings of our holy mother the Church, in whom is all truth, justice, and holiness, "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing . . . holy, and without blemish." (Eph. v. 27.)

Whilst the faithful in general, then, may bless one another, and whilst it is a laudable and pious custom among them to bless with the sign of the cross both themselves and the food of which they are about to partake, the official blessing of our holy mother the Church is infinitely superior to that of any individual however holy. She is the Divine Spouse of our blessed Saviour. Her prayer He can not refuse. As King Solomon said to his mother, "Ask: for I must not turn away thy face" (3 Kings ii. 20), so Christ says to His Church. To her above all men will that promise be faithfully kept: "Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name, that will I do." (John xiv. 13.) She has, therefore, not only the prayers of all the saints of all ages but the prayer of Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself to support her official petition. And so when she

consecrates with the holy oil the hands of her priests, praying that "whatever they bless may be blessed and whatever they consecrate may be consecrated," we may rest assured that whatever the priest officially blesses is indeed blessed.

Whilst, as we have already seen, our holy mother the Church not only attaches a special efficacy to what she thus blesses or consecrates, so that those who use such may obtain particular favors for soul and body, and that she frequently also attaches to their use an indulgence or similar favor, as in the case of holy water, beads, scapulars, and other objects, there are some objects which are, so to speak, her special favorites on account of their particular mystic as well as natural significance, such as water, oil, and candles.

In her various blessings of water and of oil the Church uses very elaborate and striking ceremonies. The former is devoted to her own official use in some portions of her ritual, so that whilst the faithful in general enjoy the private use of ordinary holy water, she reserves in a special manner for her own solemn use the water for the holy sacrament of Baptism. This is blessed on the eves of the feasts of Easter and Pentecost, and the holy oils are

solemnly mixed with it. Before the latter portion of the ceremony on Easter Saturday a portion of the water is set aside for the private use of the people in their homes and is thus called *Easter water.* The water used for the consecration of churches and similar ceremonies, called *Gregorian Water* from Pope Gregory, who instituted it, is blessed only by a bishop, and wine, ashes, and salt are mingled with it.

The holy oils are exclusively reserved for the administration of certain sacraments and for the most solemn blessings and ceremonies. They are solemnly blessed by the bishop during the celebration of the Mass on Holy Thursday, each with its appropriate ceremony. They are three in number—*Oil of Catechumens,* used in the administration of the rites in solemn Baptism; *Oil of the Sick,* used in the administration of Extreme Unction; and *Holy Chrism,* used in Confirmation. The last is composed of oil of olives like the rest, but with the addition of balsam or balm, a sweet-smelling ointment. Needless to say, the Church preserves these sacred symbols with extraordinary care. No one but the priest is allowed to touch them, and they are generally kept in a strong safe within the sanctuary, called an *am-*

bry, the keys of which are preserved with a pious vigilance second only to that which is exercised with regard to the keys of the tabernacle itself. For convenience in using the holy oils a small piece of cotton wool is soaked in each and kept in a silver vessel called an *oil-stock,* from which a sufficient quantity for actual immediate use may be pressed by applying the extremity of the thumb.

But for what may be entitled popular use the Church has a particular love for the blessing and use of candles, on account of their beautiful and expressive significance. In all her references to candles she always presupposes that they are composed of pure beeswax. Hence those of any other composition ought not to be employed and in some cases the use of such is strictly and absolutely forbidden, as in the case of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. The wax represents the most pure body of Christ, the wick His soul, and the flame the brightness of His divine nature; so that when the candle is lighted and placed upon a candlestick it is indeed a figure of "the light of the world" (John viii. 12), "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into the world." (Ibid. i. 9.)

The principal occasion on which the Church

makes use of this holy emblem is at the solemn blessing of the paschal candle on Easter Saturday, to which ceremony reference has already been made in detail.

On the feast of the Purification (February 2), commonly called *Candlemas*, wax candles are solemnly blessed and distributed to the people before Mass in memory of the ceremony to which our Blessed Lady and her divine Son so humbly and obediently submitted in the temple in accordance with the Jewish law, and of the beautiful pronouncement of Holy Simeon, who took the Divine Infant in his arms and said: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace; because my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." (Luke ii. 29–32.) As we hold the lighted candles in our hands during the procession that follows, we are reminded to imitate our great Master and Model Jesus and "so let our light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.)

In memory of the ceremony of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin there is also observed

the rite of *Churching,* or solemn admission to the church and blessing of women after childbirth. After their fall our first parents were driven out of the garden of paradise and condemned to death with all their posterity; whilst to Adam was said: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread" (Gen. iii. 19); and to Eve: "I will multiply thy sorrows and thy conceptions: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." (iii. 16.) At the same time, however, they were both consoled by the promise of Almighty God to send the Redeemer when He said to the serpent: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." (iii. 15.) Hence the function of motherhood was always associated with the shame which overwhelmed Adam and Eve when they became fully conscious of the results of their sin, and the fact was emphasized under the Old Law among the Jews by the enactment which pronounced every mother to be legally "unclean" and forbade such to enter the temple until a certain period had elapsed, when they had to undergo the ceremony of "purification" in order to lawfully take part again in public worship.

But the Blessed Virgin at length crushed

the head of the serpent by giving to the world its Holy Redeemer, thereby wiping out at once and forever all stain, ennobling womanhood and raising Christian motherhood to the most sublime dignity and honor. And although even the legal "defilement" under the Old Law, which "was set because of transgressions, until the seed should come, to whom he made the promise" (Gal. iii. 19), had no application either to our Blessed Lady or to her divine Son; they nevertheless submitted to the ancient rites as a sign of obedience and humility, as an example to us, and as putting an honorable termination to the old dispensation under which the law had been enacted.

After the example of our Blessed Lady, and in memory of her obedience and humility on that occasion, as well as in thanksgiving for her exaltation of the honorable state of motherhood, an imitation of her pious action continues to be practised at the present day by those mothers who wish to honor Mary, to thank Almighty God for the favor of their happy delivery, and to implore His blessing on themselves and their offspring. And though no obligation whatever exists which binds them in any way to submit to the present rite, and although no further significance is attached to it than

that of a pure memorial, an act of thanksgiving, and a holy prayer; the beauty of the ceremony, the special blessing of the Church, and the graces to be derived from it are sufficient to cause every good Christian mother to seek such special favors.

Strictly speaking, the ceremony is supposed to begin at the door of the church, but as a rule the whole of the ritual is performed whilst the woman kneels at the altar-rail, where she presents herself holding a lighted candle in her hand, as a sign of the good works by which she should express her thanks to God and give good example to her children.

The priest, vested in surplice and white stole, first sprinkles her with holy water, recites a psalm of thanksgiving for the favors she has received, and then, placing the end of his stole in her hand, says: "Enter thou into the temple of God, adore the Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who giveth thee fruitfulness of offspring." Then, she thanks God for the benefits bestowed upon her. The priest says several short prayers and finally dismisses her by blessing her in the form of a cross with holy water, having recited the following prayer: "Almighty, everlasting God, who, through the

delivery of the Blessed Virgin, hast turned the pains of the faithful at childbirth into joy; look mercifully on this Thy handmaid, who cometh in gladness to Thy holy temple to offer up her thanks; and grant that after this life, through the merits and intercession of the same blessed Mary, she may prove worthy to obtain, together with her offspring, the joys of everlasting happiness. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Candles are blessed at any time during the year at the request of the faithful, to be used in times of danger, sickness, and misfortune, particularly at the approach of death.

The blessing and distribution of branches of palm on Palm Sunday and the subsequent procession around the church are commemorative of the triumphal entry of our blessed Saviour into Jerusalem on that day. Then the Jews, in order to show Him honor, "cut boughs from the trees, and strewed them in the way," according to St. Matthew (xxi. 8); whilst St. John relates that "a great multitude that was come to the festival day, when they had heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm-trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried: Hosanna, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (xii. 12, 13).

The palms are solemnly blessed before Mass in a most solemn and impressive manner with many beautiful prayers and lessons explaining the significance of the ceremony and imploring the divine grace and protection for the souls and bodies of those who reverently receive them, hold them in their hands, or keep them in their houses. As a rule, the palms are distributed immediately after their blessing by the priest at the altar-rail. A small piece is given to each one who receives it by taking it in his hand and kissing it as well as the hand of the priest. It is held in the hand during the procession and also during the reading of the history of the passion, as a sign of our faith in Christ and of our desire to share in His victory by conquering our passions and serving God faithfully.

Whatever portions of the palms are left over from Palm Sunday are preserved until Ash Wednesday, when they are burned, and the ashes are blessed and distributed to the people. This ceremony is symbolical of the humiliation and sorrow with which we should be penetrated during this holy season on account of our sins. It has its origin in the custom of the Jews to put on sackcloth and strew ashes on their heads as a sign of mourning.

In the beginning only public penitents were signed with the blessed ashes. Such presented themselves at the church in order to receive the canonical penances which they had to perform during the holy season of Lent. They then knelt before the bishop, who placed on their foreheads the holy symbol in the form of a cross, at the same time reminding them of their last end in the words now so familiar to us: "Remember, man, that thou art dust, and unto dust thou shalt return." Now the ceremony is so full of spiritual good and mystic significance that none of the faithful ever care to be absent from it and thus deprive themselves of such a means of special grace and so forcible a reminder of the great eternal truths.

The *Agnus Dei* is a small piece of wax representing a lamb, marked with a cross, symbolical of the Lamb of God. These holy objects are specially blessed by the Supreme Pontiff himself and only on certain occasions. The Pope immerses them in holy water which he has previously consecrated with holy oil and balsam, and he recites many beautiful prayers over them, asking for the divine protection from all dangers of soul and body and the grace of holiness and purity of life for those who reverently keep them or wear them.

The *Miraculous Medal* is formed after the design revealed by Our Lady herself to a holy nun. It consists of a figure of our Blessed Lady, with rays issuing from her hands, representing the graces she obtains for us, and the inscription: "O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee," with other emblems. Special indulgences are granted to those who wear this medal and the special protection of the Immaculate Virgin is promised to them.

There are also special prayers in the ritual for the official blessing of rooms, houses, ships, and places; fruits, eggs, bread, wine, and other gifts of God. Over all, the Church invokes the power of God to make them good and helpful to those who use them and to free them from all danger to soul and body.

Let us, then, ever love and venerate whatever the Church blesses, and reverently guard these easy means of keeping us in the presence of Almighty God, for "every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James i. 17) like "rain in its season," accompanied with "showers of blessing." (Ezech. xxxiv. 26.)

XXIX

THE LAST SLEEP

THE BURIAL SERVICE

"Them who have slept through Jesus, God will bring with Him." (1 Thess. iv. 13.)

APPROPRIATELY and with solid reason is the Church called our "Holy Mother." When her children are newly "born again of water and the Holy Ghost" (John iii. 5) in the sacrament of Baptism she receives them at once into her maternal bosom, begins as soon as possible to nourish them with the spiritual food of her holy blessing and instruction, teaches them to walk in the way of the Lord, and leads them gently but firmly with constant and loving care through the dangers of the way to the feet of their Saviour on the holy mount. In the sacrament of Penance she helps, consoles, forgives, and encourages them to a new life and further, fresher efforts. In the Holy Eucharist she feeds them with the food of angels, the Bread of Life, the body and blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ. In Confirmation she

strengthens and perfects them unto true Christian manhood, and she provides them in her other sacraments with the special helps necessary for their particular state of life, as in Holy Orders and Matrimony. And when the time comes for their departure out of this world of sighs and tears she stands by their bed of death and with her last Holy Unction and the Viaticum of the Living Bread from heaven she strengthens them and provides them with every help they need for that last journey, and dismisses them in the name of Jesus Christ their Saviour and Redeemer.

And even when the soul has departed from the body she does not forget that the lifeless clay is deserving of her attention and respect, for she knows that during life it has been the temple of the Holy Ghost, the dwellingplace of Jesus, and that it is destined to rise again at the last day to be reunited forever to its spiritual companion and to share in the reward or punishment which shall be the lot of both for all eternity. Hence she ordains that the body shall be decently prepared and laid out for burial, so that there may be no reasonable doubt of the actual occurrence of death, and that all due respect may be shown to that body which is to be like the soul immortal; for, though "it is

sown in corruption, it shall rise in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it shall rise in glory. It is sown in weakness, it shall rise in power." (1 Cor. xv. 42, 43.) And she prescribes in detail the ceremonies to be used and the prayers to be recited when she stands as a loving mother beside the grave and lays to rest in his last sleep the child she loves so well, and whom she sadly but not sorrowfully mourns in the hope of his joyful awakening, as St. Paul so beautifully explains: "And we will not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you be not sorrowful, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so them who have slept through Jesus, will God bring with Him." (1 Thess. iv. 12, 13.)

Though it may not always be possible to carry out in detail all the wishes of the Church with regard to the ceremonies surrounding the death and burial, we must at least endeavor to imbue ourselves with the spirit which animates her in expressing those wishes with no uncertain voice in her ritual. Hence, though it may not be possible, for example, to bring the body to the church, or to bury it in consecrated ground, or for the priest to attend at the house and funeral; the portions of the burial service

to be performed at these various points are not therefore to be altogether omitted, but the entire ceremony must be conducted at the grave, which must at least be blessed.

There are several points to be observed as to the prevailing idea of the Church with regard to the manner and circumstances of the disposal of the dead. In the first place, she regards death, as is clear from those words of St. Paul already quoted, as a mere temporary separation from the body of the soul which is to live forever with it, knowing that "it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment" (Heb. ix. 27); and that the body will rise again to be re-united to the soul for all eternity, as if but awaking from sleep. "For I know that my Redeemer liveth," says Job, "and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another: this my hope is laid up in my bosom." (Job. xix. 25–27.)

In the next place, she is so conscious of the infinite purity and holiness of God, "before whom no flesh shall be justified" (Rom. iii. 20), that, except in the case of those baptized who die without ever having attained to the use

of reason, she does not immediately conclude that any one, no matter how holy he may have appeared to be during life, is immediately after death admitted to the divine presence; but that a certain period of cleansing and of satisfaction must be undergone in purgatory for the removal of venial sins and of the temporal punishment due to sins whether mortal or venial already forgiven. Not only this, but she continues for many years to offer up prayers for the repose of the souls of those recommended to her intercession, as may be understood from the fact that she arranges for "foundation Masses in perpetuity." Hence her burial service is full of prayers for the soul of the departed as well as for the hope and consolation of the living.

In the case of children who have been baptized and who have died before attaining the use of reason, the special psalms and prayers prescribed are those expressive of joy and thanksgiving as well as of consolation, for they are holy innocents and stand before the throne of God as soon as they pass out of this life. As a token of which it is prescribed in the ritual that a wreath of flowers or sweet-smelling herbs should be placed upon the body of the child and that the priest should wear a white

stole during the celebration of the last rites. She also allows the private invocation of such by the living, though she does not specially and publicly honor them on her altars, except in a general way. The fortunate parents of such should therefore rather pray to them rather than for them and thank Almighty God that He has deigned to take them thus early to Himself.

With regard to those who die without Baptism and without ever having attained the use of reason, nothing is certain except that they "can not enter the kingdom of heaven." They may probably be detained forever in that state of refreshment, light, and peace, called Limbo, where the souls of the just who died before Christ ascended into heaven were detained until the Redeemer came in person to release them and conduct them into paradise. Hence, though they will forever be deprived of the joy of the beatific vision, they will enjoy a natural knowledge and love of their Creator in a state of natural though imperfect happiness. This should be a source of great consolation to those whose infants have unfortunately died without the saving waters of Baptism; whilst it should at the same time be a warning to those who delay or neglect giving to their children the ines-

timable privilege of seeing Almighty God "face to face" and enjoying the vision of His infinite beauty and goodness for all eternity. Parents should, therefore, see that their children are baptized as soon as possible after birth and all should learn and know thoroughly the manner of conferring the sacrament in case of necessity.

With regard to the use of flowers in connection with the funerals of deceased adults, the Church does not prescribe them. But neither does she officially forbid them. Some object to their use as being a relic of a pagan custom. If this were the only reason, the same would also apply to their use as actually prescribed by the Church in the case of infants already referred to above; and also to the use of lights, and many other relics of pagan customs which the Church has engrafted on her ritual and so transformed and ennobled their use and significance. Hence if natural flowers are used merely to show our respect for the body of the deceased, and not rather to glorify him as already among the elect, they may be useful also in reminding us of the hope of the resurrection and of eternal life, according to those words of our divine Master Himself: "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it-

self remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." (John xii. 24, 25.) Besides, these beautiful and silent tributes are helps to many who have lost their dear ones for a time to "be not sorrowful, even as others who have no hope" (1 Thess. iv. 12), and to remind them to pray for the eternal repose of their souls, so that "we who are alive, who are left, shall be taken up together with them in the clouds to meet Christ, in the air, and so shall we be always with the Lord." (iv. 16.) Thus they are reminded also that both the dead and the living are still members of the Church and that we all share in the communion of saints—the blessed in heaven, the faithful on earth, and the suffering souls in purgatory.

But the use of expensive artificial flowers is not only devoid of this spiritual significance, but panders to the vanity of the living rather than helps the dead. Hence all extravagance of such a nature, as well as all unnecessary other expense and display at funerals, is sinful and foolish. It would be far better for the poor souls, as well as far more honorable and charitable on the part of the living, to have a Mass celebrated for the eternal repose of our deceased friends or relations than to make the occasion of their death an opportunity for a

vulgar display of our own short-sighted vanity, especially if the expense in connection with such is entirely beyond our means, as is not infrequently the case.

In the year 1886 the Church positively condemned and prohibited the disposal of the bodies of the dead by the process of burning or *cremation*. This she did not merely on the grounds of the want of due respect to those "temples of the Holy Ghost," but also because of the pernicious effect which the absence of the beautifully significant and instructive practice of Christian burial would have in removing gradually from the minds of her children the great dogma of the resurrection of the body, as well as the positive influence of the practice of cremation in eliminating from the mind a practical belief in that divinely revealed doctrine. That such fears are not ill-founded is clear from the manifest anxiety of its votaries to introduce the custom. They are wicked atheists who actually desire the practice as a public and general repudiation of the doctrine of the resurrection, and aim therefore at the destruction not merely of Christianity but of religion of any kind.

With regard to the manner of our resurrection after death, it is only known for certain

that we shall have the same bodies as we had in life, but without any of the defects or deformities of age, accident, or illness. Hence it is probable that all will arise in the state of perfect bodily development but with each one's own individuality. The bodies of the just will be endowed with all the properties of glorified bodies and their souls will be gifted with the "light of glory" by which they will be enabled to see Almighty God, not as "now, through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) The bodies of the just will possess the four qualities of *impassibility*, or incapacity to suffer; of *subtility*, or the property of being able to execute all movements and actions without hindrance from any obstacle; of *agility*, or the capability of immediately passing from place to place without effort; and of *light*, by which they will be rendered incomparably beautiful. "Then shall the just shine as the sun," says Christ. (Matt. xiii. 43.) Whilst the bodies of the wicked will be horribly repulsive and exposed to every evil.

One of the most pleasing in the sight of Almighty God of what are known as the corporal works of mercy is that of the decent burial of the dead. We read in the Old Testament of a holy man named Tobias who was specially re-

markable for this virtue, as well as for his wonderful charity to the living as well. Holy Scripture says of him: "Tobias daily went among all his kindred, and comforted them, and distributed to every one as he was able, out of his goods: He fed the hungry, and gave clothes to the naked, and was careful to bury the dead." (Tob. i. 19, 20.) And Almighty God rewarded him for his charity, sending the archangel Raphael to specially help and commend him. "When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord." (Ibid. xii. 12.) Hence whenever we have the opportunity we should do all we can to imitate his example, according to the custom and circumstances of the time, by showing our respect for the dead and securing as far as we are able their respectful and Christian burial. In some places, for example, poor Catholics who die without either money or friends are buried in public, or common graves, with others of different religions or of no religion at all, at the expense of the State. Would it not be very pleasing to God if we could secure that such could be buried in Catholic graves by contributing to a fund for the

purpose or by organizing one if necessary. And it would be more consistent with the spirit of the Church if the priest could read the burial service with the certainty of no subsequent intrusion of the body of a heretic or an unbeliever into the very same grave which he blesses according to the ritual.

The burial service, properly speaking, begins at the house where the body of the deceased lies awaiting burial. It includes the Office, Mass, and Absolution in the church; and concludes with the actual burial. Before the body is removed from the house, the priest, vested in surplice and black stole, sprinkles it with holy water and recites the psalm *De Profundis*. Going to the church he recites the *Miserere*. At the entrance he says: "Come to his assistance, ye saints of God, meet him, ye angels of God. Receive his soul and present it to the Most High. May Christ, who called thee, receive thee; and may the angels lead thee into the bosom of Abraham." Then the coffin is placed before the sanctuary, with the feet toward the altar (but with the head toward the altar if a priest or bishop), and candles are lighted at each side, generally six in number. Then the Office of the Dead is sung and Mass for the Dead is celebrated. After

which the Absolution is pronounced by the celebrant standing near the bier, during the prayers for which the body is sprinkled with holy water and incensed, the "Our Father" being said secretly. All these prayers are very beautiful and instructive, as, for instance: "O God, to whom it belongeth always to have mercy and to spare, we humbly beseech Thee for the soul of Thy servant *N* whom Thou hast called out of this world, that Thou deliver him not into the hands of the enemy, nor forget him forever; but command that he be received by Thy holy angels and taken to paradise, his true country; and that as he hath believed and hoped in Thee, he may not suffer the pains of hell, but may have joy everlasting. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen."

The body is then removed and the priest accompanies it to the grave, saying: "May the angels lead thee into paradise; may the martyrs receive thee at thy coming, and take thee to Jerusalem the Holy City. May the choirs of the angels receive thee, and mayest thou, with the once poor Lazarus, have rest everlasting."

If the grave is not blessed he then blesses it, sprinkles the corpse and grave with holy water and incenses them. Then the body is lowered

into the grave and the *Benedictus* is recited with its antiphon: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live: and every one who liveth and believeth in Me shall not die forever." Then he once more sprinkles the corpse with holy water and says the Our Father and the final prayers, ending with: "May he rest in peace. Amen. And may the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen."

And thus our holy mother the Church lays to rest the child she loves so well and whom she hopes to meet with Christ in the hour of its glorious resurrection, when the angel's trumpet will call it at the last day from its last sleep, to live forever with our divine Master in His House on the Holy Mount.

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